

Issue 98

18 February
2005

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Walking the talk with Steve Clayton



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THIS ISSUE...



Metrobus buying
Tellings sells former Crystals operation to Metrobus.



Real-time travel
Assessing the benefits of real-time information.



TV on the buses
Creating a new medium with on-board TV. But what do passengers think?



Trams on track
Boost for Edinburgh's tram plans from Scottish parliament committee.



1987 DAF LAG Panaramic

49 seats, ZF 6 speed,
double glazing, driver
bunk, continental door,



1994 DAF Bova Futura

48 seats, ZF 6 speed,
double glazing toilet,
drinks, Futurair system,
radio/pa/cassette



1994 DAF Bova Futura

48 seats, ZF 6 speed,
double glazing, A/C,
curtains, toilet, servery,
water boiler, drinks



**1990 DAF SB2300
Jonckheere Deauville**

51 seats, ZF 6 speed,
double glazing, toilet



**2002 Iveco Indcar
Maxim II**

29 seats, Manual, A/C,
curtains, double glazing,
auxiliary heater, power
door, radio/pa/cassette



**1999 Iveco Indcar
Maxim I**

29 seats, 6 speed, A/C,
curtains, double glazing,
power door,
radio/pa/cassette



**1999 Iveco Indcar
Maxim I**

24 seats, 6 speed, A/C,
curtains, double glazing,
power door,
radio/pa/cassette



**1997 Iveco Eurorider
Beulas Stergo e**

50 seats, 8 speed,
curtains, double glazing,
A/C, servery,
Water boiler, drinks



**1997 Dennis Javelin GX
Neoplan Transliner**

49 seats, ZF 6 Speed, A/C,
curtains, double glazing,
toilet, TV/Video, drinks,
fridge



**1996 Neoplan MAN Tri-
Axle Cityliner**

49 seats, ZF 8 Speed,
A/C Webasto, servery
rear kitchen, oven, drinks,
fridge, TV/Video



**1996 Neoplan MAN
Cityliner**

49 seats, ZF 8 Speed,
double glazed, auxiliary
heater, toilet, TV/Video,
toilet, drinks, fridge



**1999 Dennis Javelin GX
Neoplan Transliner**

49 seats, ZF 6 speed, A/C,
double glazed,
continental door, toilet,
TV/Video, drinks



**1997 Volvo B10M Plaxton
350**

49/53 seats, ZF 6 Speed,
continental door, power
door, toilet, TV/Video, drinks,



**1994 Volvo B6R
Jonckheere Ascot**

33 seats, 6 speed,
curtains, power door,
Toilet, radio/pa/cassette.



**1999 Toyota Caetano
Optimo IV**

21 seats, curtains, power
door, radio/pa./cassette



**1993 MAN Tornado Setra
215HD**

49 seats, ZF 8 Speed, A/C
drivers bunk, toilet, power
door, drinks, fridge.
TV/Video, radio/pa/cassette

Excellent Selection of Pre-owned Coaches



2000 DAF Bova Futura

49 seats, ZF 6 speed, A/C double glazing, Retarder, toilet, servery, water boiler, drinks, fridge, radio/pa/cassette



1996 Dennis Javelin Plaxton Premiere 3200

49 seats, 6 speed, curtains, double glazing, toilet, servery, drinks, radio/pa/cassette



2000 Iveco Eurorider Beulas Stergo e

47/51 seats, ZF 8 speed, carpets, curtains, A/C Webasto, Retarder, toilet, drinks



1999 Iveco Eurorider Beulas Stergo e

48 seats, AVS gearbox, A/C double glazing, toilet, servery, water boiler, drinks, fridge, radio/pa/cassette



2002 Iveco Eurorider Beulas Stergo e

49 seats, 8 Speed, 3 point seat belt, A/C, Webasto, Retarder, toilet, drinks, TV/Video



2002 Iveco Eurorider Beulas Stergo e

53 seats, Automatic, 3 point seat belt, A/C, Webasto, Retarder, carpets, curtains



1996 MAN 11.190 Berkhof Excellance

33 seats, ZF 6 Speed, double glazing, Telma, power door, toilet, TV/Video, drinks



1997 Dennis Javelin GX Neoplan Transliner

49 seats, 6 speed, A/C, double glazing, continental door, Telma, toilet, TV/Video, drinks



1999 MAN Neoplan Transliner

48 seats, 6 speed, A/C double glazed, continental door, toilet, TV/Video, drinks



2001 MAN Neoplan Transliner

49/53 seats, ZF 6 speed, A/C double glazed, continental door, toilet, TV/Video, drinks



1997 Setra S250 Mercedes

48 seats, ZF 6 speed Manual, A/C, Telma, power door, toilet, TV/Video, fridge, drinks



1993 MAN Tornado Setra 215HD

49 seats, A/C, Telma, power door, toilet, radio/pa/cassette, TV/Video, fridge, drinks



1993 MAN Setra 215HD

48 seats, ZF 8 Speed, carpets, curtains, A/C Webasto, Retarder, toilet, TV/Video, radio/pa/cassette

Fax: 01709 700007



1993 Volvo B10M Plaxton Premier 3200

48 seats, toilet, drinks, radio/pa/cassette, continental door



1995 Volvo B6R Jonckheere Ascot

35 seats, ZF 6 speed, double glazed, radio/pa/cassette



1994 Volvo B6 Caetano

35 seats, 6 Speed, double glazed, continental door, radio/pa/cassette/cd

www.mentorplc.com



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Every care is taken over the accuracy of material in *Bus and Coach Professional* but the publishers cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions. Views and opinions of contributors to *Bus and Coach Professional* are not necessarily those of the publishers who cannot accept responsibility for such contributions.

Letters and articles may be submitted and should be sent to the editor at the address above.

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Comment



A common complaint about new housing developments is that their planners all too often take little account of the desirability of accommodating bus services. They assume that everybody who buys one of their wonderful new homes will own at least one car, and probably more.

Which makes a plan by Bovis Homes in the East Midlands interesting. Here, as part of a proposed new development, Bovis is actually talking up front about funding a bus service, and providing real-time information at stops. What's more, buyers of these homes would travel free.

It would be nice to think that the plans by Bovis herald a renaissance in the approach which developers take to building new housing estates, and that we'll see more developers who not only acknowledge the importance of buses, but work with transport operators to ensure that services are provided.

However reading between the lines I suspect the free bus service is perhaps only a pawn in a much bigger game over planning permission for a potentially contentious development.

But it's still good to see buses being valued.

Before the traffic commissioner has given his ruling on an inquiry into services operated by First in Bristol, the company's managing director has come out fighting.

Speaking after last week's inquiry, Alex Perry said: "We believe that we have demonstrated that the traffic commissioners compliance standards for the 'window of tolerance' set at 95 per cent is currently unachievable".

He is not the first person to say that, nor, I fear, will he be the last. But against the background of the work his company is doing to raise service standards in the city you can sense his frustration not only in what he says, but in the timing of it.

And it is frustrating when bus operators are expected to comply with rules which take no account of the reality of urban traffic congestion which can change from day to day.

Bus companies are in business to make money. They do this by providing reliable, dependable, services. When traffic congestion disrupts these services the companies are victims, not perpetrators.

Yes, the commissioners must take action against the small number of companies who don't attempt to run a service as registered. But they also need to recognise when disruption is caused by factors outside the operator's control.

Otherwise the law, to coin a phrase, is an ass.

Steve Rooney

steve.rooney@busandcoach.com



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BNEWS BRIEFS

Plans for a new 1,200-home housing estate at Edwalton include a proposal by lead developer **Bovis Homes** to provide £10million of funding for a bus service to Nottingham, which would be free to estate residents. The service would be supported by real-time information in all bus shelters on the route. The development is the subject of a public inquiry.

The **Enviro200** midibus unveiled by TransBus at Coach & Bus 2003 is due to enter trial service with London United this week, as part of a programme of demonstrations to various London operators. The integral Enviro200 has an exit door behind the rear wheels. And **Stagecoach** is testing its New Zealand-built Designline battery-electric bus in London, as part of a countrywide tour. It is running for a week in East London.

A new **London Coach Parking Map** is to be launched by CPT and TfL at next month's British Travel Trade Fair at the NEC in Birmingham.

Two operators this week took over town services in **Grantham** following the decision of MASS Transit to cease operations in the town. Leicester-based Centrebus has taken over most routes, operating from the former MASS depot. Two routes are being run by Pulfrey's Coaches, which is based in the town.

Market Prices

	Price	High	Low
Arriva	567	570	363
FirstGroup	360	379	253
Go-Ahead	1543	1608	1075
National Exp.	888	937	644
Stagecoach	116	123	73
Southern Vectis	42	44	36
Tellings	128	153	124

Closing prices on 14/2/05 plus 12 months high and low.

Metrobus buys Dartford operation

TELLINGS Golden Miller is selling its Dartford operations to Metrobus. The deal is to be concluded on 5 March.

When Tellings acquired the Dartford bus operations of Crystals in August 2003, it was with the intention of expanding operations in southeast London. The company says that the anticipated opportunities for expansion did not appear.

Four regular routes and a mobility bus service are involved,

with Metrobus taking on 16 vehicles and around 50 staff.



Tellings' Dartford services taken over by Metrobus.

Call for end to double-deck school runs

A CALL for the phasing out of double-deck buses on school runs has been made by the Welsh Assembly's education committee. It also recommends fitting CCTV cameras to try and control pupils' behaviour on buses.

The committee has been reviewing school transport provision in the light of the fatal accident in 2002. Pupil behaviour was seen as a possible contribution to the death of a 12-year-old boy when a Leyland Atlantean operated by EST of

Llandow left the road and hit a tree.

At the inquest it was said that one boy repeatedly leant across the driver to interfere with buttons on the dashboard and that he also sounded the horn and issued tickets.

The Assembly's education committee agreed it would be unreasonable to expect the driver to control pupil behaviour, and is to tell local education authorities to make use more adult escorts on buses.

New Urban Challenge buses

FIVE NEW East Lancs-bodied Volvo B7TLs are a key part of a joint initiative between First and Plymouth city council, supported by Cornwall county council and Caradon district council.

The Department for Transport awarded Plymouth council's transport team £631,750 under the Urban Bus Challenge Fund, with First investing an additional £420,000. The £1million package has replaced a fleet of double-decker buses and mini buses, many of which were over

20 years old.

The new vehicles are route-branded for the Tamar Link, operating from South East Cornwall through to Plymouth, and are named after birds, following a competition run by First and the Plymouth Evening Herald.

Among the vehicles being ousted by the low-floor B7TLs are elderly Bristol VRT double-deckers which date back to the days of the National Bus Company.

www.firstgroup.com

Arriva confirms German takeover

ARRIVA has taken over German bus company Sippel. The deal is worth up to €25million (£17.5million) with €22million (£15.4million) being paid now and an additional maximum of €3million (£2.1million) being payable against performance targets up to 2008. Sippel employs around 740 people and operates some 220 vehicles.

The company operates throughout the Rhine-Main area, including in and around Frankfurt, Mainz and Wiesbaden.

Unaudited figures for 2003 show turnover for Sippel of €32.6million (£22.8million) and an operating profit of €2million (£1.4million).

Bob Davies, Arriva's chief executive, says: "The German public transport market is the largest in Europe, with the bus and rail sectors rapidly moving to a competitive tendering environment. This acquisition allows us to participate in future tenders for bus services in one of Germany's most important economic regions."

"Sippel has an excellent reputation for delivering high quality services to its customers and we look forward to working with the management and employees of this successful business to capitalise on further opportunities in this market."

Arriva entered the German transport market in April last year when it acquired the rail company Prignitzer Eisenbahn Gruppe, followed in October by a 76.9 per cent stake, now increased to 89.8 per cent, in Regentalbahn, which operates regional passenger rail services in Bavaria, Thuringia and Saxony as well as joint services with the Swiss and Czech state railways.

www.arriva.co.uk

Volvo sales rose sharply in 2004

VOLVO sales rose sharply in 2004 to a total of SEK 201billion (£15.2billion), an increase of 15 per cent over 2003, while operating income more than doubled to SEK 14.2 billion (£1.1billion). This is the group's highest-ever earnings, excluding gains from nonrecurring events.

The company's bus division turned a 2003 loss of SEK 361million (£27.3million) into

a 2004 profit of SEK 185million (£14million). Bus sales revenue rose by 6 per cent to SEK 12,722million (£962million). The number of vehicles delivered in 2004 was 8,232, up from 7,817 in 2003.

The year saw Volvo take total control of Prevost and NovaBus, as joint owner Henlys ran into difficulties.

www.volvo.com

Volvo bus deliveries by market

	2004	2003
Europe	3,417	3,087
Asia	2,341	2,227
Nth America	1,388	1,553
Sth America	624	369
Other markets	462	581
TOTAL	8,232	7,817

Source: AB Volvo

Edinburgh tram service approval

A PROPOSED tram service between central Edinburgh and the city's airport has received qualified approval from the Scottish parliament.

In their preliminary stage report, MSPs on the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill Committee have concluded that the Bill should proceed, but have identified areas where further work is required.

It concludes that the scheme appears to have the potential to "produce transport, socio-economic and environmental benefits to the local, regional and national economy" and recommends to the parliament that the general principles of the

Bill should be agreed.

The convener of the committee, Bill Aitken, says that the committee believes that trams can bring real and practical benefits to Edinburgh. But there are concerns about funding, and projected passenger numbers.

The Bill is being promoted by Edinburgh city council which hopes to have the airport line and Line 1, the North Edinburgh Loop, in operation in 2009. They will cost £473million.

www.tramtime.com



Initial designs for the new tram service between Edinburgh and its city airport.

Administrator called in at NatEx Australian subsidiary

THE sole remaining National Express subsidiary in Australia, Westbus, has called in the administrators. It is thought to be the first time a major British plc in the transport sector has taken such a course of action. The move does not affect the associated UK coach business, Westbus UK of Hounslow, which is trading normally.

Last October National Express sold three of its Australian bus businesses for A\$70.5million (£27.5million). At that time the group said its remaining company was "participating in the Bus Industry Reform which is being carried out by the New South Wales Government" but

indicated that it was likely that it too would be sold.

However four months later Deloitte have been appointed voluntary administrators as the Australian holding company, Bosnjak, was "unable to renegotiate its loans from the group's major financier National Bus Company".

"The Board regrets the need for the appointment but wishes to assure passengers, employees and other interested parties, that all bus services including school services, will continue to operate uninterrupted," says Owen Eckford, managing director of Bosnjak Holdings.

www.westbus.com.au

Minibuses on demand

A DEMAND-RESPONSIVE minibus service has been launched in the Tandridge area of Surrey, funded for three years with money from the government's Rural Bus Challenge.

The service is open to all, and bookings can be made by phone, text or e-mail.

It operates from 0900 to 2300 on weekdays, and between 0730 and 1600 on Sundays. From April early morning commuter runs to Gatwick Airport will be added.

Two vehicles are required for the operation, one of which is a low-floor Mercedes Sprinter, the other a Ford Transit with a lift.

www.buses4U.org.uk

Light rail under government investigation

THE COMMONS transport select committee is to investigate whether investment in bus routes might provide better value for money than continuing to fund light rail schemes. The inquiry follows last year's National Audit Office report which found that although light rail had improved the quality and choice of public transport, it had not brought all the benefits expected. The report found that light rail systems were not fully integrated with other forms of public transport and had had a limited effect on congestion, pollution and road accidents.

Members of the committee will look at future prospects for light rail following reports of rising costs on several proposed systems,

including in Manchester and Hampshire. MPs will also consider barriers to the development of light rail and the effect of different funding arrangements on the overall cost of light rail systems. In addition the investigation will look at examples of bus-based alternatives similar to schemes in Crawley and in Leeds and Bradford.

Transport authorities in the UK have welcomed the investigation. Jonathan Bray of the Passenger Transport Executive Group says: "Light rail appears to have fallen out of favour with the more suggestible elements of the transport debate's chattering classes. UK light rail schemes have taken approximately 22

million car trips off the roads. They are popular with users and have made a significant contribution to urban renewal."

PTEG sees the select committee investigation as an ideal opportunity to promote the case for UK light rail and to highlight other issues raised in last year's NAO report which, Bray says, provided "a blueprint for how light rail could be procured better, faster and cheaper".

Interested parties are invited to submit evidence to the committee in writing before 25 February. Dates for formal hearings have yet to be announced. It's the second time in five years that the select committee has investigated light rail in the UK.

NEWS BRIEFS

Arriva North West and Wales this week launched new buses and other improvements to the **Traws Cambria** service between Aberystwyth and Bangor. The buses are six VDL SB120s with Wrightbus Cadet bodies, and are part-funded by the Welsh Assembly.

Wrightbus has secured its first order from Reading Buses, for 12 Scania Solars. Other new customers for 2005 include RoadCar in Lincolnshire, which has ordered six B7RLE Eclipse Urbans, and Konectbus in Norfolk, which is taking five Pulsar Gemini double-deckers on VDL DB250 chassis.

Go North East has doubled the frequency of a circular service in Gateshead from every 30 to every 15 minutes. The improved service has been funded under the government's Kickstart scheme, and developed in conjunction with Gateshead council and Nexus, the Tyne & Wear PTE.

New tolls planned for the **Mersey Tunnels** will mean a drop in the charges for coaches, from £2.40 to £1.30 for two-axle vehicles. The charge for three-axle coaches rises from £3.60 to £3.90.

UK diesel price update

pence per litre

Northern Ireland	86.4
Scotland	85.1
Scotland - remote areas	88.7
Wales	85.6
Northern England	84.7
Midlands and East Anglia	84.8
Southern England	84.4
UK garage average	84.8
Supermarket average	82.3

Retail price sample from garages in main population centres.

Source: AA

NEWS BRIEFS

The **Greater Manchester PTA** is increasing the maximum concessionary bus fare from 40p to 50p, and rail and Metrolink fares from 45 to 60p.

Translink has dramatically reduced Saturday services in the city of Armagh. The town service has been withdrawn, and 11 loss-making rural services reduced. The company says that its Saturday services were losing £2,300, as most people travelling in the town did so by car.

Glasgow city council has complained to the Scottish traffic commissioner about buses, which are stopping illegally or sitting for too long at bus stops, causing traffic congestion. It says it will provide evidence naming the operators it considers to be at fault.

Cheshire county council has become the first authority to receive smartcard certification from ITSO. There are a large number of local authorities using smartcards for concessionary travel in the UK but Cheshire's scheme is so far the only multi-operator travelcard offering passengers the choice of stored value cards or period passes.

Transport consultancy **TPI** has won a contract to conduct one of the first environmental studies in the UK of a local authority's transport plan – now required by new European Union rules. It is to produce a Strategic Environmental Assessment for the London Borough of Brent.

Funding of almost £1.5million has been secured from the Welsh Assembly for a new bus station development in **Blackwood**, South Wales. Work will start later this year.

A text messaging timetable service has been launched by the **Greater Manchester PTE**. So far 2,000 of the region's 12,500 bus stops have identifying codes, which mobile phone users text to 84268 to get the scheduled times of the next three buses.

More funding for yellow school buses

THE GOVERNMENT has given further backing to the yellow school bus concept with an additional £7.3million worth of funding for the My Bus project set up by Metro, the West Yorkshire PTE. Metro says that the first phase of the project showed an average drop in car use of more than 60 per cent, with one school in Brighouse showing a drop of 91 per cent. A primary school in Bradford has reported a 30 per cent reduction in cars outside the school gate and of those pupils now using the



■ **My Bus**, Metro's school bus programmes wins £7.3million funding.

yellow bus, more than 60 per cent previously travelled by car.

"By the end of February we will have introduced 11 brand new custom-built buses and they will be carrying total of

1,100 West Yorkshire pupils to and from school each day," says Metro chairman Stanley King. "And if you include the pupils using the pilot schemes already in place, the total is round 2,200."

Training course for deaf awareness



■ **First Manchester drivers** undergoing new deaf awareness training

TWELVE drivers at First Manchester are participating in a training course for deaf awareness at the company's new Life Long Learning Centre, located in its Manchester depot.

The course has been developed by Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES), part of Manchester city council. It was originally designed by experts at MAES for front-line staff working for the council.

"Signing for the deaf was one of the earliest skills that drivers identified to our LLLC representatives they wanted to learn once the centre was up and running," says Jim Donovan, First's regional training and development manager. "Not only does such training add to the drivers' life skills, but in their work it will also enable them to provide an additional level of customer service."

Focusing on safety

PRESSURE group BUSK – Belt Up School Kids – has announced that it plans to turn its attention to wider issues. Director Pat Harris says: "BUSK has been exceptionally successful in achieving what it set out to do, but this does not mean that we can now sit back and relax when it comes to the safety of children. It is our success that means we can now expand the work we do to include the travelling public in general.

"We believe that the public don't always appreciate the problems that transport operators and drivers come up against on a daily basis, and part of our expansion plan is to educate people about this aspect."



■ **New logo and remit for BUSK**

Inquiry into Livingstone's free travel plan

THE LONDON Transport Users' Committee has set up an inquiry into London Mayor Ken Livingstone's proposal to make all bus travel free for the under-16s. His plan is to scrap fares for under-16s from September.

Brian Cooke, LTUC chairman, says: "We have long thought that extending free travel on buses to children over 11 may be wrong. Our members feel that this will discourage children to walk, could cause over-crowding on buses, and could lead to more anti-social behaviour, which discourages other passengers from travelling."

LTUC has formed an investigation committee to look at all the issues concerning children on buses including road safety, effects on the school run, on health, on other modes of transport, and on local authorities, and will ask various groups and organisations to give evidence.

Cooke continues: "Bus fares have recently risen between 20 and 43 per cent, in order to raise £80million a year, and London's transport system is receiving significant, overdue investment, and being increasingly subsidised by London's council tax payers, so it does seem odd to spend £60million giving free travel to teenagers, who may not need it, and who can often walk.

"We urge the mayor to postpone the implementation of this plan until we have conducted our inquiry, which we aim to finish in six months."

Standards set too high, says First MD

THE TRAFFIC commissioners' "window of tolerance" is "unachievable" according to First Bristol managing director Alex Perry.

Speaking after a public inquiry last week into the company's services in the city Perry said: "We believe that we have demonstrated that the traffic commissioners' compliance standards for the 'window of tolerance' set at 95 per cent is currently unachievable, although that does not affect our determination to improve, Bristol's traffic problems make it extremely difficult."

Studies carried out on behalf of First in Bristol point to a figure of between 80 and 85 per cent being realistic in current traffic conditions.

Perry continued: "The findings of the Department for Transport pilot survey for the Bus Partnership Forum showed an even worse national average, with only 66 per cent compliance across the UK with the traffic commissioner's 'window of

tolerance' standards."

First Bristol is not prepared to reveal its compliance level but says that over 90 per cent of journeys start on time, but are then delayed on route, making the issue one of punctuality rather than reliability.

Perry says that the company has worked hard to improve services and that less than 0.5 per cent of the buses which were running late or failed to operate during the commissioner's monitoring exercise did so because of staff shortages. A lack of staff was highlighted as a major issue in previous public inquiries.

The company is, from April, funding a police community support officer to enforce bus lane restrictions. It has also increased the number of people using pre-paid tickets, which it says reduces boarding times and improves service reliability.

The traffic commissioner's decision has yet to be announced.

www.firstgroup.com

Objections to new First headquarters

FIRSTGROUP's plans to build a new £10million worldwide headquarters and a new bus depot in Aberdeen have attracted strong local opposition, with the city council having received 3,800 letters of objection and a 6,000-name petition.

In a report to city councillors, planning standards manager Chris Jackson comments: "An exceptionally large number of representations have been received, indicating a very strong degree of local interest in the proposal."

George Mair, managing director of First Aberdeen, says: "I think at this stage we always knew wherever we sought to move our operation, it was going to raise concerns."

"The important thing is to follow the planning process through, allow people to have their say, and allow us to answer questions on issues the authority is still looking for information on."

FirstGroup hopes to have the new site operational by December 2006.

School bus defect purge

FIVE OUT of 11 school buses checked by Avon and Somerset police in December were found to have defects. None received an immediate prohibition, but four operators were issued with delayed prohibitions by VOSA inspectors. Police mounted the operation because they had received a number of complaints from parents, pupils and head teachers about some of the services.

Several vehicles were overloaded, with one bus designed to take 79 passengers reportedly carrying 105.

Inspector Mike Tew of the Road Policing Unit says: "Bus and coach operators have a legal obligation to ensure the safety of all passengers and it is clear that not all of them are taking these responsibilities seriously."

"Parents place their trust in coach drivers and the companies that operate them, and have a right to expect that the highest safety standards are being applied at all times when their children are travelling to and from school."

www.avonandsomerset.police.uk

Swansea park-and-ride increase

SWANSEA council has reported dramatic growth in the use of the city's park-and-ride services over the Christmas period. At the established Landore site, to the north of the city centre, the number of users rose from 12,300 in December 2003 to 16,000 in December 2004. At the newer Fabian Way location, to the east of the centre, use of the service almost doubled from 5,900 to 10,800.

The park-and-ride charge is £1.50 for all-day parking, with free travel to and from the city

for up to four people.

Deborah Stux, park-and-ride manager for Swansea council, says: "December is always a busy month but these figures clearly show that park-and-ride is becoming more popular every year."

"We've made a lot of improvements since the introduction of the service in order to make it as easy as possible for people to use, and it's still the cheapest and safest way to park your car."

www.swansea.gov.uk

Driver loses appeal for racial discrimination

A BUS driver who was sacked by West Yorkshire Transport Services after being elected to Bradford city council as a British National Party member has lost a claim for racial discrimination. WYTS provides transport services for disabled people in the city. The driver, Arthur Redfern, contested his dismissal under the Race Relations Act as he had not been employed by WYTS long enough to sue for unfair dismissal.

WYTS, a subsidiary of Serco, had dismissed Redfern on health and safety grounds, saying it

was concerned that people who opposed the BNP could attack its vehicles.

Serco welcomed the decision by the Leeds Employment Tribunal to uphold its decision to dismiss Redfern, after his association with the BNP became known. John Whitefoot, Serco Group's head of employment relations, says: "It was important for Serco to bring this action because we reasonably believed that the presence of an active member of the BNP in a sensitive post posed an unacceptable risk to health and safety."

NEWS BRIEFS

Drivers at **Go-Ahead's** depots in Sunderland and Washington have rejected a pay offer. Discussions are continuing between the company and the TGWU.

The driver of the **RoadCar** Volvo B7TL which killed five pedestrians at Ingoldmells in April last year has been charged with causing death by dangerous driving.

Funding totalling £12million has been awarded to Scotland's four **Regional Transport Partnerships** to help improve public transport. Scottish transport minister Nicol Stephen says the additional funding will make public transport more attractive with better information, new buses, improved bus shelters and bus priority schemes. By 2007, the Scottish executive will be spending £1.4billion per year on a more efficient transport network, of which 70 per cent will be targeted at public transport.

Huntingdon bus station is to be modernised. Huntingdonshire district council had been considering building a new bus station at a different location in the town, but has concluded that redevelopment of the existing site is a better option.

European diesel price update

pence per litre equivalent

Austria	60.25
Belgium	63.85
Czech Rep	57.93
Denmark	73.54
Estonia	51.30
Finland	65.27
France	65.98
Germany	67.42
Greece	53.79
Netherlands	65.27
Hungary	71.24
Ireland	70.29
Italy	71.72
Luxembourg	51.64
Norway	78.67
Poland	65.83
Portugal	63.11
Spain	58.09
Sweden	73.11
Switzerland	70.26

Source: AA

Travelling in real-time

Real-time information has become an important tool in increasing the positive perception of passenger transport. A new DfT report identifies the extent of RTI systems across England and Wales. **Stewart Brown** reports.

That anxious wait at a bus stop, checking and rechecking your watch and in between times staring down the road, willing the bus to appear is, slowly, becoming a thing of the past.

Real-time information – RTI – is changing not just perceptions of public transport, but that feeling of uncertainty which slowly washes over you as you wait at a stop and the expected bus fails to appear when it should.

It's been a long time coming. London started experiments with its RTI system, Countdown, as long ago as 1992.

But it's gathering pace, as a survey published this month on behalf of the DfT and the Welsh Assembly shows.

This says that in England and Wales at the end of 2004 on-bus

RTI units were fitted to 13,690 buses, representing 41 per cent of the English and Welsh bus fleet. Twelve months earlier the figure was 11,292 buses, or 35 per cent of the fleet. As a result just over half of all bus trips made in England and Wales are on RTI-equipped buses.

But there's a catch: the London effect.

Just over half – 55 per cent – of RTI-fitted buses are operating in London. And 73 per cent of the journeys made on RTI-equipped buses were in the capital.

But London's dominance of the RTI revolution is declining, as more authorities elsewhere invest in RTI.

The number of RTI signs at bus stops has remained constant in London, at 2,000, while elsewhere there has been an

increase. Comparing 2004 with 2003, the number of RTI-signed stops in the shire counties rose by almost 25 per cent to 2,549, and in the PTE areas there was an almost 90 per cent increase, albeit from a lower base, to 681 signs.

So the actual number of stops with RTI displays is low – 10 per cent of those in London, 1.5 per cent of those in shire counties, and just one per cent in PTE areas.

Overall the number of bus stop signs is expected to rise from 5,320 now to over 7,000 by the end of this year, and to over 8,000 by the end of 2006. All of this growth will take place outside London.

The proportion of the bus fleet fitted with RTI equipment will rise too, from the current 41 per

cent to 51 per cent by the end of this year, and to 56 per cent by the end of 2006. Most of this growth will be outside London. But clearly RTI will still only be available at a small percentage of stops.

Incidentally, only a minority of vehicles – 10 per cent – which are fitted with RTI tracking equipment use it to provide on-board information for passengers.

While RTI was originally about information at bus stops, the rapid progress being made in the technology has seen information being made available at other locations and by other means.

One of the most potentially useful is a display at locations such as shopping centres. Why should bus passengers go to a stop to find out when the next bus is due, if the information can

The new Solo - now shorter,



With an entrance step lower than any other bus on the road, the Solo is designed for accessibility and real passenger appeal. But where operators were once limited in their choice of low floor vehicles, the Solo now comes in a range of lengths between 7.8 and 10.2 metres, seating between 24 and 37 passengers. Plus there's now the new SlimLine Solo - a 'narrow body' version that offers passengers and operators all the advantages of the full size Solo, but saves 130mm in the overall width.

■ *Text messages to mobile phones offer the kind of instantaneous response which can be valuable while waiting at a stop.*



be supplied at some other, more useful, point? The survey says that 48 such locations had RTI displays at the end of 2004. This figure is forecast to rise to 160 during 2005.

Two other key areas for the dissemination of real-time information are the internet and mobile phones.

Text messages to mobile phones offer the kind of instantaneous response which can be valuable while waiting at a stop, although the cost of using this type of service offers an interesting area for study: a figure which represents quite a high proportion of the fare paid to travel on the bus can be spent finding out when the bus is coming.

RTI is not only about visible messages. A small number of authorities are providing audio announcements at bus stops. In 2004 there were 934 so-called talking bus stops, all but three of them in shire counties. This figure will more than double during 2005 to an anticipated 2,055, boosted by the introduction of some 550 audio stops by the South and West Yorkshire PTEs.

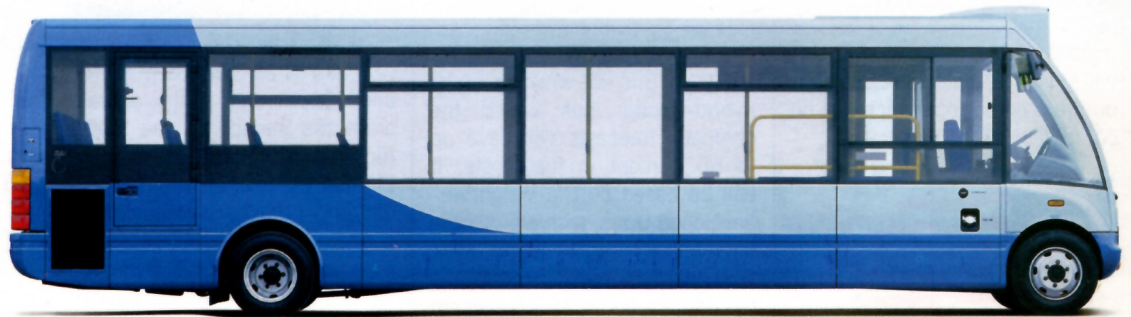
□ The report can be viewed on the DfT website or at <http://home.btconnect.com/centaurconsult/rtig/annualsurvey04.pdf>



■ *Real-time information increases users' confidence in bus travel.*



longer and narrower



The SlimLine Solo is already proving popular in areas where larger buses have difficulties servicing routes with access problems. The new longer variant, with its higher payload, is also winning acclaim on higher density operations.

So, however long or wide you need your Solo to be, you know that it'll measure up perfectly.

OPTARE



NETHERLANDS

CONNEXION has ordered 83 Volvo 8700 intercity buses. Fifty will be 12.8m two-axle 8700 RLE models for service in Leiden. The remaining 33 will be three-axle 14.5 8700 BLEs, most of them for operation in Zwolle. The 8700 model is built in Poland.

SOUTH AFRICA

VOLKSWAGEN South Africa is to expand its bus business in the country, selling Brazilian-built buses from August this year.



AUSTRALIA

WESTBUS of Sydney has gone into voluntary administration. It reportedly has debts of nearly \$100million (£40million). The company operates 520 buses and has 800 employees. Services are continuing to operate as the administrators seek a buyer for the business.

QUEENSLAND will become the first Australian state to make seatbelts compulsory on school buses travelling in mountainous regions. The state government will spend \$12million (£5million) on the programme, which will be completed by 2009.



USA

THE Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has unveiled the first of 32 Neoplan dual-mode articulated rapid transit buses. The 60ft-long low-floor vehicles are designed to run as conventional trolleybuses, but are also fitted with 500bhp Detroit Diesel engines. They will operate in diesel mode above

ground and as trolleybuses in a new underground tunnel at Boston waterfront. The electric traction motors provide power for four wheels. Other recent Neoplan deliveries to MBTA are 44 CNG-powered artics, 28 trolleybuses, and 175 conventional 40ft diesels.

TO address a \$57million (£30million) deficit, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) is proposing to increase bus fares by 25c (13p). The current fares is \$1.25 (67p). The proposal would also increase by 50c (27p) an hour the cost of parking at a meter or in a city-owned car park.

CUBIC Transportation Systems has secured a \$2.8million (£1.5million) contract from the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation to provide the agency with bus ticketing equipment. The new equipment will be compatible with the smart card system which Cubic is supplying to Metro, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority.

LAIDLAW International has reduced Greyhound's fleet by 150 vehicles, and employee numbers by one-third. Laidlaw says that Greyhound now has 3,600 buses, 14,000 employees, 1,900 agencies and 19,000 daily departures.

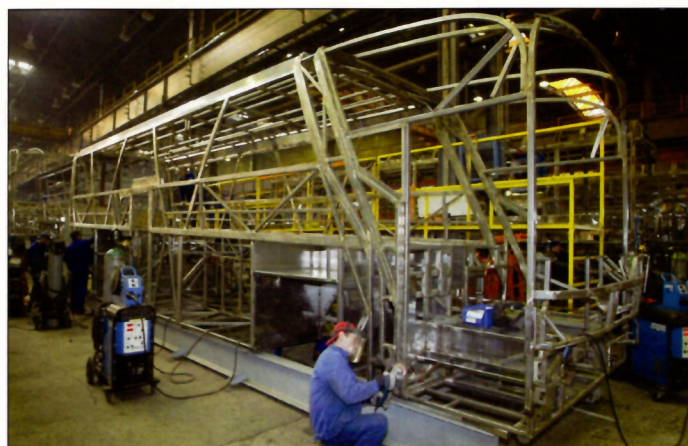
The company also says its plans to introduce an enhanced network that will focus on safety and speed, fewer stops, and attention to short- to medium-haul passengers.

OPTIMA Bus is working on a hybrid-electric bus which the company forecasts will save up to 50 percent in fuel costs. It will be based on the Wrightbus-developed Opus, with a prototype due to be completed in May. Optima says that it expects the hybrid to account for 40 percent of sales by 2009.

CHILE

THREE operators in Santiago, the Chilean capital, have placed a joint order for 1,667 buses from Volvo. It is the single largest-ever order for Volvo buses, and is for 1,157 articulated B9SALF, and 510 B7RLE. The B9SALF chassis will be manufactured in Brazil; the B7RLEs in Sweden.

Bodywork will be built in Brazil by Marcopolo, Ciao Induscar and



Steel framework of Solaris coaches in production at Polish plant.

Busscar. Deliveries start in June this year, and all 1,667 buses will be delivered by February next year.

The new fleet is being used to modernise Santiago's public transport with a five-corridor Bus Rapid Transit system.

Volvo argues that there is a vast need for new, effective public transportation systems in many of the world's major cities and says that a BRT system offers many advantages, not least of which are financial.

"The costs for a new infrastructure are relatively very low and the operating costs for bus traffic can be fully covered without subsidies," says Henrik Munck, product manager for Volvo Buses' transportation system solutions. "At Volvo Buses, we are convinced the BRT system will become the predominant solution for effective transportation solutions in major cities in many parts of the world."

JAPAN

TOYOTA has unveiled a fuel-cell bus which between March and September will operate a shuttle service at the 2005 Aichi World Exposition in Japan. Eight of the hydrogen-fuelled 65-passenger buses will operate a 4.4-kilometre link between two sites at the event. A hydrogen refuelling station will be located on-site.

TURKEY

MERCEDES-BENZ is to supply 450 Citaros to IETT, the Istanbul urban transport operator. There will be 350 standard 12m models and 100 articulateds. They will be the first low-floor buses in Turkey. IETT operates 2,500 buses and since 1997 has standardised on Mercedes products.

The Citaros will be delivered this year.



POLAND

SOLARIS Bus & Coach is one of the first companies in Europe to achieve compliance with the revised environmental standard ISO 14001:2004. Environmental measures taken by Solaris include sorting waste for recycling throughout the plant, both in production and office departments, using water-based rust-proofing paints, and reducing the consumption of energy and natural raw materials in bus production.

THAILAND

BANGKOK'S first Bus Rapid Transit services will be in operation by the end of this year. There will be two routes, one 19km long, the other 16km. The BRT system is costing 50million baht (£700,000) per kilometre, compared with 800million baht (£11million) per kilometre for an elevated railway. The new BRT system also offers a quicker resolution to the city's traffic congestion.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Czech bus maker Karosa sold more than 1,700 buses last year, up 12 per cent on 2003 and a record for the company, which is part of Irisbus. The growth was largely thanks to ongoing sales in western European markets which accounted for 66 per cent of Karosa's sales. Key markets included France, Italy, Iceland, Finland and the Benelux countries.



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DIARY EVENTS

Wednesday 23 February

Conference: Making Transport Choices Regionally and Locally, London. 020 7787 1210.

www.thewaterfront.co.uk

Tuesday 1 March Conference:

Making Transport Partnerships Work, Telford. 01952 202336.

www.atco.org.uk

Wednesday-Thursday 2-3

March Exhibition: BTTF, NEC, Birmingham.

www.britishtraveltradefair.com

Monday-Wednesday 7-9 March

Exhibition: Busworld India, New Delhi.

Monday-Thursday 14-17 March

Conference: RTPI 2005, London. 020 7915 5055.

www.iir-transport.com

Tuesday-Thursday 15-17 March

Conference: Bonded Coach Holiday conference, Calella, Spain.

www.cpt-uk.org

Friday 18 March Conference:

Improving Transport in the North West, Manchester. 020 7787 1210.

www.thewaterfront.co.uk

Wednesday 30 March Dinner:

London Transport Awards, London Hilton hotel. 01224 263134.

www.abs.ac.uk/cftp

Thursday 31 March Conference:

London Transport Awards, CBI Conference Centre, London. 01224 263134.

www.abs.ac.uk/cftp

Tuesday-Thursday 5-7 April

Exhibition: Commercial Vehicle Show, NEC, Birmingham.

www.cvshow.com

Thursday-Friday 14-15 April

Conference: Transport Excellence through Practical Delivery, Nottingham. 01223 881622.

www.cicc-conferences.org.uk

Attention all passengers!

A LOT of pre-recorded announcements are irritating for a variety of reasons. Voice synthesisers never sound like real people, and then there are those digitised recordings made up by patching a real voice together – most noticeable in timetable announcements where you get a noticeable break between parts of the message: "The next departure. Will be. At Twelve. Forty. Five."

You know the kind of thing.

So let's salute National Express. When it decided to record new safety messages to be played at its eight coach stations – it didn't turn to a professional agency. Instead it listened to its own staff, running a competition to discover the voice of National Express.

The company says the response was phenomenal and its communications department was flooded with all types of CDs, tapes and voice messages left on an answering machine.

All the entries were judged for clarity, and eventually reduced to three vocal finalists. These

were the appropriately named Melody Ebbage from Stansted, along with Chris Rolinson and Andy Denton from Birmingham, who were all invited to attend a session at a recording studio in Worcestershire, DRP.

DRP managing director Dale Parmenter chose the winner, Chris Rolinson. "Chris's voice was extremely clear, all his words were extremely well spoken – well done," he says.

So next time you're in a National Express coach station listen out for the safety message – brought to you by a real human being.



■ Left – Right: "Melody Ebbage, Chris Rolinson and Andy Denton voice their delight during 'The Voice' finals."

Those were the days . . .



THEY don't build buses in Wigan any more, now that production of the President double-decker has come to an end. The company formerly known as Northern Counties had a rough ride at times over the last 20 years, and in the late 1980s it formed an alliance with Renault, with the aim of tackling the single-deck market with this model, the Renault PR100.

Renault would supply underframes, and Northern Counties would build the Renault-style body. It was an attractive enough bus, but the PR100 was being replaced in France, so it wasn't exactly cutting-edge technology – and why buy a Renault when you could buy a

Lynx from Leyland, a familiar company with a secure future...

Anyway, only five were built for Britain. One was a seed vehicle for London, three were for an airport, and the fifth was this demonstrator, seen running for Southampton CityBus which went on to buy Dennis Darts rather than Renaults, as the market moved away from big buses to midis.

Renault did moderately well in the minibus market, with its S46, S56 and S75 models but these were a breed whose popularity was short-lived.

Both the London Renault PR100 and this demonstrator ultimately ended up with Lincolnshire operator Hornsby.

Latest design teaser

ALEXANDER DENNIS last month released a picture of the back end of their new Enviro400, and this month they give us a glimpse of a sketch of the front end. Here it is, carefully obscured by sales director David Quainton, posing for a photograph of members of what the company calls the Bus Design Group, which it describes as "an informal gathering of leading operators".

The sketch shows the front upper deck window curving into the roof, which I suspect may be a flight of artistic fancy, but I'm prepared to be proved wrong. It also shows an attractive deep windscreen with a curved lower edge, and a curvaceous lower front panel.

If the finished product looks like this it might just be the vehicle to give the Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini a run for its money.





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Brake testers for roadside checks

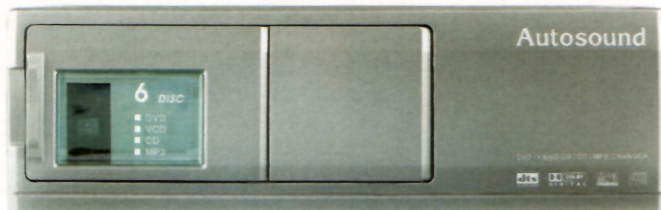
MAHA UK has won the contract to supply commercial vehicle brake testers for VOSA to carry out roadside brake tests. MAHA's IW 7 Eurosystem brake testers will be used by VOSA at various roadside check sites across the UK.

The MAHA IW 7 Eurosystem brake tester, which runs on Windows XP, is currently used in VOSA test centres.

Maha will be exhibiting its new Automatic Eurosystem Test Lane at this year's combined Commercial Vehicle Show and Automotive Trade Show at the NEC from 5-7 April. The Test Lane, complete with new headlamp aligner and scissor lift fitted with Play Detectors, is fully computerised.

"The IW7 Eurosystem truck brake tester will be displayed at the show with different specifications to suit all workshops," says MAHA managing director Gus Gregory.

www.cvshow.com www.maha.co.uk



Autosound's latest 'In Coach Entertainment'

New DVD system from Autosound

BRADFORD-BASED Autosound is offering a new six-disc DVD/CD changer for coach applications. The new system is capable of playing up to six DVDs or CDs to enhance the entertainment choice for coach passengers.

Autosound says that the DVD changer is an ideal replacement for ageing video players providing much more flexibility

for passengers.

The average CD can hold up to 80 minutes of music, however, due to this changer's MP3 capabilities, travellers can enjoy hundreds of tracks together with movies.

Priced at £285, the new DVD also provides Dolby digital surround sound.

[Autosound 01274 688990](http://www.autosound.co.uk)

Safer transport with CCTV

PLYMOUTH Citybus is using a new CCTV system to reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour on school buses.

Eight double-deck school buses have been equipped with Look CCTV X.200 digital cameras.

"So far the results have been impressive, says Plymouth Citybus operations director Phil Smith. "CCTV has allowed us to gather evidence of poor behaviour, which we've then shown to schools for them to take appropriate action.

"As a result, there has been a vast improvement in anti-social behaviour creating a more relaxed and feel-safe journey for school children."

Funding for the new system came from Plymouth City Council and the local education authority.

In addition to its school services, Plymouth Citybus has equipped a further eight new buses with Look CCTV systems for use on its core commercial network.

"CCTV has been warmly received

by staff and passengers alike both feel more secure and safer. A similar matched funding approach is being taken by Devon & Cornwall police under its Police Community Initiative with regard," adds Smith. "If the police initiative goes ahead we'll be able to add a further four buses equipped with CCTV."

[Look CCTV 01253 891222](http://www.lookcctv.co.uk)

Optimas for First

ALMEX has won a contract to provide Optima systems on First buses in Devon and Cornwall.

Funding for the contract has been provided from central government, Devon and Cornwall county councils, Plymouth city council and Torbay council, as well as First itself.

A wireless system will update drivers on route with important issues; i.e. driving conditions. Passengers will also benefit from well presented information.

New website launched for seating manufacturer

RESCROFT has launched a new, improved website to provide an easy access to every product in its range of vehicle seating.

Special features include a detailed insight to the company, latest news section and links to printable pages for each product.

Information on Rescroft's exhibitions for 2005 also features.

www.rescroft.com



Screen shots of Rescroft's latest website.

Bordeaux smart card system

ERG Transit Systems is supplying a 2.4 million smart card fare collection system to Bordeaux. The new system will be installed on 350 buses serving the interurban area and should be complete by mid 2006.

The system will allow the use of paper tickets, magnetic stripe tickets and smart cards to ensure maximum compatibility and increased passenger convenience.

"Our systems are already providing easier journeys for commuters in the city of Bordeaux, where ERG recently completed the transport smart card system", said David Stone, ERG global head of business development. "We now look forward to supplying the citizens of Gironde with our state-of-the-art technology.

"Gironde joins a growing list of cities around the world that have selected ERG smart card technology and this further strengthens ERG's presence in France and the rest of Europe," adds Stone.

This is the fourth French contract won by ERG for smart card fare collection equipment within the past twelve months. In addition to the Conseil General De La Gironde, recent tenders awarded include Department of Bas-Rhin Strasbourg, Clermont-Ferrand and La Roche/Yon.

www.erggroup.com

New portable power pack

DMS Technologies has introduced new Red Flash portable power packs for heavy vehicles.

The Red Flash "High Rate" engine-start range has been specifically designed for the commercial applications including bus and coach, marine, rail, and the emergency services.

The power packs are housed in a robust polyethylene case, designed to protect the internal batteries and electronics from damage and are resistant to oils and contamination often found in workshops.

"We use fully insulated cable clamps, welding grade cable and the highest quality batteries for these units," says Paul Edwards, DMS sales director. "In the harshest conditions, they will start the most stubborn engines without delay."

The units offer high rate cranking current of up to 1,100 amps, and 2,400 amps peak

current from the larger models. Safety features include surge and spike protection circuits, on/off isolator switch, reverse polarity warning buzzer and heavy duty, fully insulated clamps. An LED indicator for charging and battery state of charge is also fitted and an optional trolley is available for the larger models.

www.dmstech.co.uk



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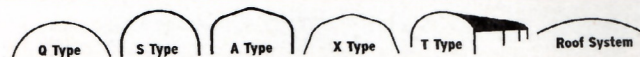
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Stopping



It has been the mainstay of public transport advertising for years. Bus advertising provides an effective, low-cost alternative to TV, radio and billboard advertising. But now screens are being installed on buses and trains, creating another highly effective medium for getting the message to the masses. **Peter Plisner** reports.

TV on the buses

You know how it is, you're on the bus and you spot a headline in the newspaper being read by the person in front of you. If you want to know more it's a case of looking over their shoulder. But for some bus travellers in the busiest areas, there's now an alternative in the form of on-board TV showing a variety of programmes including the news. TV screens have been appearing on hundreds of buses in London and Birmingham. Trials have been on-going in both locations and by all accounts passengers like the idea. Of course they're not just there to entertain. The appearance of the TVs heralds the dawn of a new era in public transport advertising. Gone are the days when adverts were just static, now they move.

On-board TV was tested by a small number of bus operators in the late 1990s, but never really took off. However more recently it started again in

central London, as a trial on 28 vehicles on one route. Now there are almost 400 buses equipped with 20-inch flat screens on the upper and lower decks. The original pilots were sanctioned by Transport for London in 2001 on route 15, which is operated by Stagecoach.

Research conducted during the trial showed high levels of satisfaction, with nearly three quarters of passengers saying they liked the idea. One of the big conclusions was that the TV screens had the potential to improve customer satisfaction with the service offered. Passengers also said they like seeing news and information items. While adverts were not something that they strongly liked to see, passengers interviewed said that they were not averse to seeing them.

The systems in both London and Birmingham are provided by Crystal Eyes, a media company

based in Surrey. Strategic director Russell MacDonald says: "People did actually enjoy having something to see other than looking out of the same window at the same scenery that they have looked at for the last 30 years. Passenger preferences show that they like news and sport."

The system is operated by a hi-tech media computer, which drives the screens when the bus is out on the route. Once back at the depot the vehicle's on-board computer receives updates from a special server, which connects via wireless network to the bus. The server gets its information via an ADSL link to a remote mainframe computer. Unlike conventional advertising, the beauty of the system, if working properly, requires no human intervention to change the adverts and certainly doesn't require the vehicle to remain off the road for long periods during the day. Indeed the more times the bus returns to the depot, the more the adverts and other material can be changed and updated.

However, despite the hi-tech nature of the medium advertisers haven't been in a mad rush to get their products on screen, particularly in Birmingham. Initially, screens concentrate on news and documentaries and it's



clear that the system is still evolving slowly.

MacDonald puts it down to the need to reach a critical mass: "We spent the second half of last year fitting the system and now the selling is only just starting."

In London there's already a considerable amount of advertising. In general the shows carry up to 15 adverts in each 15 minute slot. This represents a maximum of around seven minutes of advertising. MacDonald says: "On average, between eight and ten spots are taken up at any given time. We then fill up the remaining space with other material."

The number of buses equipped with screens is rising fast in both locations. In London Crystal Eyes reckons it now has about 300,000 viewers per day, around the same number of people that read the Evening Standard newspaper. MacDonald notes:



In London and Birmingham there's anecdotal evidence that the system is helping to curb rowdy behaviour on the buses, particularly amongst youngsters.





Unlike conventional advertising, the system requires no human intervention to change the adverts and certainly doesn't require the vehicle to remain off the road for long periods during the day.



"Media buyers are now getting much more excited by it." Recent clients include Vodafone and Microsoft.

While entertainment and advertising are the main reasons for installing the screen, there are other spin offs that make the system attractive to both bus users and operators. The Crystal Eyes system also integrates with the vehicle's CCTV cameras. Prior to installing TV on the buses, CCTV images were just recorded by an on-board video machine and used if a crime was committed. Now the images from a variety of cameras are shown at regular intervals on the screens.

In London and Birmingham there's anecdotal evidence that the system is helping to curb rowdy behaviour on the buses, particularly amongst youngsters. The research from London also showed that passengers thought the introduction of CCTV on buses was necessary and would help to improve safety. Many said it made them feel safer when travelling both during the day and at night.

Buses aren't the only public transport mode that's getting the TV treatment. Train passengers in the south-east and the Midlands are getting a daily diet of news

and documentaries via what's been called '360-On-Board'.

In the Midlands a recent survey showed that 80 per cent of passengers like the idea. Dave Watkin, sales and marketing director for Central Trains, say: "360-On-Board has come a long way since we introduced it back in the summer of last year. The majority of the teething problems have now been overcome and we are really pleased with the feedback that we have received from our customers." Central Trains has even introduced 'Quiet Zones' for passengers who don't want to watch, and later this month plans to introduce real-time train information, which it hopes will enhance the passenger journey.

Although the take up of advertising space has been slow there seems little doubt that in the long-term advertisers will warm to the idea. The problem at the moment is that there simply aren't enough screens out there. That's expected to change in the future, particularly if the feedback from passengers continues to be so positive.

Peter Plisner is the BBC's Midlands Transport Correspondent.



TV screens have been appearing on hundreds of buses in London and Birmingham. Trials have been on going in both locations and by all accounts passengers like the idea.



■ Steve Clayton and St Helens general manager, Matt Davis share a joke."



Viva Arriva!

Arriva is one of the largest transport service organisations and is currently undergoing new developments at depots in the North West and Wales. **Gavin Booth** hitches a ride with Steve Clayton, Arriva's UK Bus managing director, to report on the fleet's vision of the future.

“If all employees can enjoy good conditions it has an impact on the service we offer our customers. It demonstrates the value we place on everybody.”

Steve Clayton,
Arriva UK



Steve Clayton is a self-confessed early bird. Which is just as well. He left his Hertfordshire home in the early hours of a cold February morning to drive to Watford Junction where he caught the 06:17 train to Liverpool. He has planned a day looking at Arriva's North West & Wales company; a bit of a luxury these days as his job as Arriva's UK Bus managing director doesn't allow him as much time as he would like at the coalface. Having recently succeeded Steve Telling as CPT president, there are now further demands on his time.

We meet, as arranged, at Liverpool's Bootle depot at 09:20, where he's seen chatting with North West & Wales MD, Bob Hind, and Bootle general manager, Len Gibbs. Hind will accompany Clayton for the rest of the day.

Bootle depot has benefited from a major refurbishment that was completed less than a year ago. Len Gibbs is proud of the greatly improved facilities for driving and engineering staff and talks of improved staff morale.

Clayton tells how Arriva is investing heavily in such facilities. "It demonstrates the value we place on everybody," he says. "If all employees can enjoy good conditions it has an impact on the service we offer our customers." It's a theme he will return to during the day.

He is very conscious that his arrival at a depot can interfere

with the normal flow of activities. "When I'm in the traffic hall, the drivers are more important than I am. I like to visit depots, whether it's somewhere we've spent money or somewhere we're planning to spend money, just to see for myself. I always visit before we decide to carry out any major alterations; I'm trying to make working for Arriva a pleasant and satisfying experience." To emphasise the point, Len Gibbs tells me that staff turnover has reduced at Bootle since the improvements.

Arriva has a continuous programme of customer satisfaction surveys that measure satisfaction down to depot level. "As a city, Liverpool is much maligned," says Clayton. "Yet our employees here are the most highly-valued in the country. These surveys help us to identify customer priorities and we recognise that one size fits all doesn't work." Bob Hind adds that punctuality is often the highest priority for customers, but not at Bootle. "Smoothness of ride was a priority, and we realised that there was a problem with potholes and speed humps. Internal cleanliness was another priority, and although all Arriva buses are cleaned daily, there's a problem after four in the afternoon with an accumulation of litter, so we're providing cleaners at some terminals."

Arriva North West & Wales has 19 depots, spread from

Aberystwyth to Manchester and they compete with each other in a quality standards league based on such factors as punctuality, reliability and MOT pass rate. There's a monthly prize and an annual prize of £20,000 for the top depot. "You might think these factors would be easier to control at one of our smaller depots," says Hind, "but on one occasion our biggest, St Helens, won it. Employees there are using the money to buy gym equipment for their social club."

"We're justly proud of our employees," Clayton adds. "They often work under difficult conditions, facing challenges that are not of our, or their, making. We realised a while ago that we had to maximise our resources by tackling matters like non-attendance. Improving their working experience is part of this."

At 10:05 we walk down to the depot yard to inspect a new hybrid Optare Solo bus; one of six for a Merseytravel contract, recently won by the depot. The buses are funded by Merseytravel under the CATCH (Clean Accessible Transport for Community Health) project in Liverpool and a brief demonstration run shows the bus to be quiet with good acceleration – "much better than a turbo-charged milk-float", Clayton jokes!

Back at Bootle at 10:15 we meet the depot's engineering manager, Ken Houghton and talk

■ Arriva is trialling a hybrid-engined Optare Solo.



of alternatives to diesel engines. "Arriva went further than others on LPG," Clayton recalls, "but we're now converting the buses back to diesel. LPG technology is a source of unreliability and difficulty. We tried Compressed Natural Gas in Southport, but we're converting there too. We find with CNG that the gas quality is unpredictable and varies widely, which affects the engine. We should be trying these things, though. Arriva is big enough to experiment." Arriva has also fitted particulate filters to 88 of its Liverpool fleet.

In another bus, staff were on hand to demonstrate Arriva's latest advances in CCTV, using laptop computers. They can achieve wireless downloads, which are saved to disk, invaluable in prosecutions for on-bus crime and for providing evidence in insurance claims.

Steve Clayton is enthusiastic about the increasing sophistication of CCTV. The Arriva vehicle dynamics system not only captures a CCTV image but also shows a mass of other data – braking and acceleration, speed and RPM, the direction of travel, even if direction indicators are being used. "We've invested a lot of money in CCTV, working with authorities like Merseytravel and Transport for London, and we've got to get payback. In one of our new vehicles in Gillingham, we captured images of girls throwing flour and water around the bus. They had bags

over their heads, playing to the camera, but hadn't reckoned with another camera that caught them putting the bags on. We can show these images to head teachers and parents, and once lawyers see them, court cases can be concluded more quickly. What many people don't realise is that a successful prosecution for criminal damage brings with it a criminal record, which can affect things like getting a job."

The CCTV demonstration has been taking place as the bus travels from Bootle to Birkenhead, where we arrive at 1052. Behind a splendidly Edwardian municipal frontage proclaiming 'Tramway Offices 1903' lies Arriva's new Birkenhead depot, opened by secretary of state for transport, Alistair Darling, in May 2004. This followed a period of disruption as the old tram and bus sheds were completely demolished and a new depot was established. Bob Hind paid tribute to the staff who fared well in the customer satisfaction surveys, "even when they were working from a building site".

Clayton and Hind meet up with Howard Farrell, newly installed as area manager, based in Birkenhead, and the former manager, Matt Davis, who is moving to become general manager at the larger St Helens depot.

Sitting in Farrell's office overlooking the yard, there is talk of the depot's important role, providing not only services around

the Wirral area, but on the all-day cross-river routes to Liverpool, heavily used by commuters. Steve Clayton returns to Arriva's belief in providing a good working environment. "We've not just invested in kit like new buses," he says. "We are investing in depots. After all, we have responsibilities to our shareholders and we realise there is a point where you can over-invest in a business and receive little return." Bob Hind adds: "Looking after employees is important everywhere. Liverpool is experiencing an economic upturn and so bus companies are in a more competitive job market. Drivers operate in their own workspace, and what they come to at work at 04.15 on a February morning is important. How can you expect a positive driver attitude when he or she has to trudge through mud to a Portakabin and then find their bus doesn't start?"

"Supervisors are crucial to running a successful bus service," Clayton says. "We're interested in supervisory development. The industry used to ignore them, but they appreciate being valued and it reflects in their relationship with the front-line people."

The Birkenhead improvements have cost £5million and Clayton spent a lot of time at the depot while they were being carried out. "In my job I can't always have regular contact with employees," he says, "so days like today are important. I hate the idea of



Bootle
depot has benefited from a major refurbishment and the former Crosville depot requires substantial work and so the site has been sold and a new depot is taking shape.



■ Continued on page 22

■ A newly-installed bike rack passes the Clayton strength test.



I encourage people to tell me if something's not right. It can be uncomfortable, but I'm looking for the little boy who sees the Emperor's New Clothes for what they are.

Steve Clayton,
Arriva UK



Steve Clayton's State Visit, and while some employees may feel intimidated when they meet me, I hope they recognise my interest in them." From observation that day, Clayton has an easy manner with staff, who seem to respond to him well.

The conversation moves on to local challenges improving punctuality, the increase in car ownership and the lack of bus priorities. "I see bus priorities as passenger priorities," says Clayton, "but in many places buses are not on the local authority agenda. They're not perceived as an issue until they're not there. The bus industry needs assistance to provide a better service. Ironically, it's easier for me to meet with Alistair Darling than for some of my local MDs to meet the chief executive of the local council."

After a walk through the modern 14-bus workshop, and a chat with engineering manager, Dave Smith, Clayton and Hind head for a walk around the spacious depot yard and inspect the 'Berlin Wall' - a concrete structure that has had to be added for security. Then a visit to the new social and sports club, a facility that is used as a messroom during the day. There was also a pause to smile at a poster headed 'Viva Arriva!' which turns out to be offering staff lessons in conversational Spanish, with Arriva paying the fees - not unconnected with Liverpool's forthcoming stint

as European City of Culture in 2008.

At 13:00 we head westwards by car to North Wales and a very different aspect of the company's operations. We arrive at Bangor at 14:20 to be met by the local managers. Again, changes are in the air; the local manager, Dafydd Williams, is moving to the company's depot at Llandudno Junction, and Martin Robinson is taking up the post as area manager, based at Bangor.

The former Crosville depot, though centrally situated, requires substantial work and so the site has been sold and a new depot is taking shape on the edge of the town. In spite of the poor facilities at the old base, Bangor staff are among the most highly rated in the UK. Dafydd Williams explains that the drivers work in groups and so they get to know the passengers well. Although staff turnover is high, some leave to work for other operators and return very quickly. "It's the grass is greener syndrome," says Clayton. "At one point, we might not have taken them back, but now, where appropriate, we do. And of course, there's a spin-off in canteen talk."

Clayton points out the risk assessment posters, published on a route-by-route basis with input from drivers. All drivers carry accident cameras and Williams shows a guide to accident scene photography.

Then it's off to the main bus

stand in Bangor, the hub of the North Wales services. Clayton is disappointed by the poor facilities provided by Gwynedd Council for passengers there, but the main event today is to inspect a brand-new VDL SB120/Wright single-decker. One of six buses were jointly bought with the Welsh Assembly Government for the long (3hr 20min) Traws Cambria X32 route between Aberystwyth and Bangor. Clayton and his team examine the bus, which is fitted with a bicycle rack and admire the attractive interior, which is finished in Arriva corporate style.

Back at Bangor depot for a quick cuppa, the 'umpteenth' of the day, then off at 15:32 to look at the site where the new depot is under construction, with a projected August opening date. Although it is on an industrial estate and less central, most buses are out all day, so there is no great problem. At 15:45 we leave the site for a trip to Llandudno Junction depot, where Steve Clayton chats to network manager, Graham Turner, about the Trapeze computer scheduling system that has been introduced across the Arriva group. There have been teething problems, but the general view is that it can be a highly useful package, if used properly.

At 16:50 we leave Llandudno Junction for the drive back to Liverpool along the scenic North Wales coast. The in-car conversation ranges from the



Much better than a turbo-charged milk-float!

Steve Clayton,
Arriva UK



Merseytram proposals to the Arriva Bus of the Future project and the high-profile introduction of a new bus fleet in Gillingham in 2004. "There are elements of the Bus of the Future in the new Gillingham buses, in the floor covering, an internal colour scheme and softer lighting, for instance," Clayton explains. "We hope to have some pure Bus of the Future vehicles in the future. We've been looking at our vehicle replacement policy. We've been able to cascade buses from our London operation and we have more buses coming to replace the last of the Routemasters; we're the biggest Routemaster operator left. In other places we'll go for the 'big bang', like Gillingham, where we put in 60 new and 40 refurbished buses, where the early results are very promising."

He likens the policy to tanks in World War 2. "The Germans had fewer inferior tanks than the French," he says. "But the French tanks individually were no match for a Panzer Division. Spreading our largesse too thinly has no business impact. A new fleet improves morale and customer satisfaction, so it's a win-win situation. The revenue generated should more than pay for the investment. One thing I would say – never introduce new vehicles and new ticket machines on the same day!"

I ask about Arriva's corporate culture and how it compares with the UK's other major

bus groups. "We are a locally-managed, centrally-co-ordinated group," he says. "That's the guiding principle. We control vehicles, how they look, capital expenditure and budgets, and we discuss best practice with the senior managers at our meetings. There is some central control, but not a single controlling mind."

"I encourage people to tell me if something's not right. It can be uncomfortable, but I'm looking for the little boy who sees the Emperor's New Clothes for what they are. The Arriva board recently asked senior managers what they thought of the board, and I copied the report on me to the senior management team. After all, their perception has to be my reality."

"I suppose my philosophy is like Nike's – 'just do it' – and when the introduction of our Gillingham network was threatened by the TransBus situation, our employees took that to heart and just got on with it."

Arriva has probably played less on the cult of the personality than some others, but Steve Clayton's down-to-earth logic, his sense of humour and his approachable manner all place him in a strong position both at Arriva and at the CPT.



■ Clayton: My philosophy is like Nike's - just do it.

STOP!

Safety comes as standard

Safety is key for any form of public transportation. Individual operators carry out numerous tests but VOSA statistics demonstrate that brakes are still a common reason for annual test failure.

Steve Banner reports.



Having a vehicle fail a PSV test due to a braking problem is a very serious matter.
Colin Copelin, CPT



Faulty brake components and unacceptable service brake performance figured in 3.9 per cent and 3.8 per cent of PSV test failures respectively during 2003/2004 according to Vehicle and Operator Services Agency statistics. The only defects that were more common were poor headlamp aim – which appeared in 10.6 per cent of failures – and bad bodywork and interior condition, which figured in 4.2 per cent.

So is it the case that buses and coaches are complying with test requirements on the operator's own roller brake testers only to fail when they're dispatched to

the local VOSA test centre?

That's certainly been an issue where trucks are concerned. Although a joint investigation carried out by VOSA and the Retail Motor Industry Federation, involving six RMI truck dealer members last year, concluded that such worries were unfounded. The Freight Transport Association believes it remains a problem with both PSVs and lorries.

"We're still hearing that it's happening," says FTA bus and coach national standards and engineering development manager, Paul Honey. "Even

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Operators used to be able to ask VOSA to carry out a voluntary brake test on a vehicle. They still can, but these days they're likely to be served with an immediate prohibition if it fails.



firms that run workshops that also happen to be designated test stations are finding that it's a problem."

The Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) technical adviser, Colin Copelin, isn't convinced that it's a major issue for PSV operators however. "Our members aren't saying that it's an area of serious concern," he comments.

"It's pretty rare I'd have to say," says Sam Simpson, operations director at Reading Buses.

That's not to say of course that buses and coaches never pass brake tests at the owner's

premises only to fail at VOSA's.

Such failures can be due to a combination of factors, says Gemco technical sales specialist, Chris Manby. Gemco distributes BM Autoteknic roller brake testers within the UK. "Roller brake testers are calibrated to plus or minus 3 per cent," he says. "If your tester happens to be calibrated differently to VOSA's, then that can play a part.

"Maybe the one brake tester's rollers have seen more wear than the other's have. That can affect the efficiency reading by about 1 per cent.

"Maybe the driver who takes the vehicle for test happens to be more aggressive with the brakes on the test lane than the technician who put it on the brake tester back at the owner's workshop. That too can make a difference, again to the tune of about 1 per cent," he continues.

"Other issues that may have a bearing are whether the brakes were cold the first time round, but hot the second, and whether the tyres were dry the first time, but wet when they got to the test centre. Individually these are all minor considerations, but they can soon add up."

"A lot of things can happen on the road between the operator's workshop and the test centre," says Phil Stockford of Phil

Stockford Garage Equipment.

Copelin adds three more variables: "You can get a different reading if you steam clean the vehicle after you've put it on your own roller brake tester, but before you send it for test, because you force dirt onto the brakes. Clearly it will be different too if you reline the brakes between the two events.

"Something else that makes a difference is if the driver ensures that enough air pressure is built up at the pre-test, but fails to do so at the VOSA test."

"Operators should ensure that their pre-test areas are as clean as possible," advises Brian Beacon, UK manager at equipment supplier VL Test Systems. "Oil and grease on the tester's rollers

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will affect the readings.

"You'll also get different readings if one brake tester isn't level, but the other one is."

Most of these factors will only make a difference if the brakes are only operating at just above the legally required minimum efficiency level of 50 per cent. "To avoid any disputes operators should always aim to achieve a service brake efficiency level well above this figure," says a VOSA spokesman.

"They should be getting at least

60 per cent at every single test," says Copelin. "If they get 51 per cent at a pre-test, then they should start asking themselves why."

"We brake test all our vehicles every six weeks as a matter of course, so we pick up any problems early on," says Danny Elford, engineering manager at The Kings Ferry. "What's more, our drivers report any faults – brake imbalance for instance – to us very promptly."

"Remember that having a vehicle fail a test due to a braking problem is a very serious matter," says Copelin. "You're liable to

be served with an immediate prohibition, and may have to get the bus or coach towed back to your depot."

"You may also find that VOSA officials turn up at your premises a few days later to carry out a fleet check."

VOSA has produced a best practice guide to preparing large vehicles for test, which is placed on the agency's web site.

Operators used to be able to ask VOSA to carry out a voluntary brake test on a vehicle. They still can, but these days they're likely to be served with an immediate prohibition if it fails, even though

it's not a statutory test and they've brought the bus or coach in of their own free will.

"I can understand why VOSA adopt this policy because they fear that if they don't, the vehicle could be involved in a fatal accident on the way back to its home depot," says a senior industry figure. "Nevertheless, I still think it's short-sighted because it penalises the responsible operator who is trying his best to comply with the regulations."

Beacon makes the point that an operator is less likely



"Some of VOSA's machines are up to 15 years old, but they still work properly because they're kept up to scratch."

Brian Beacon, VL Test Systems.



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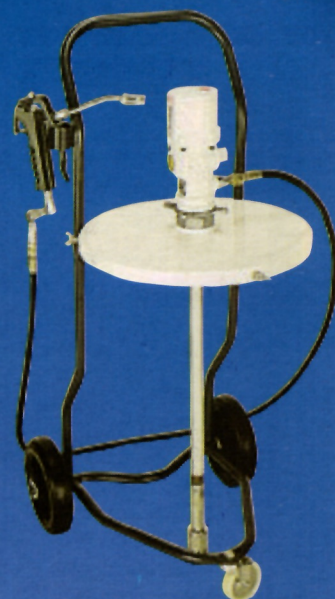
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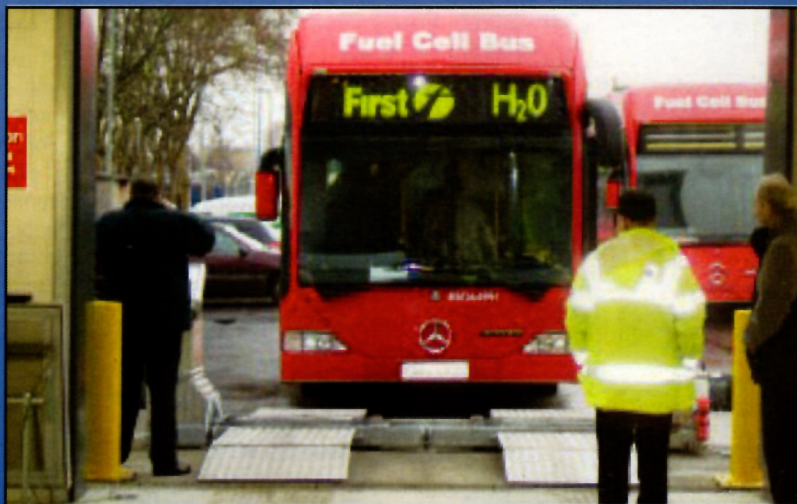
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to encounter differences in the readings produced by his own roller brake tester and VOSA's if it's looked after properly.

"It should be calibrated and serviced twice a year, and the rollers should be replaced when the grit wears down," he says. "You see a lot of machines with no grit on their rollers at all."

"Some of VOSA's machines are

up to 15 years old, but they still work properly because they're kept up to scratch," he adds.

A brand-new roller brake tester costs from £20,000 to £28,000, says Beacon. "The price has remained much the same for the past 10 to 15 years, partly because there's so much competition in the market," he observes.

The latest ones are remarkably easy to use, he adds: "To put it bluntly, they're idiot-proof!"

The necessary groundwork will typically cost approximately £2,000, says Beacon. If you want to avoid that additional expenditure, then there's another option. Invest in a mobile surface-mounted brake tester instead.

They're about the same price as one that's permanently installed, says Manby, and equally effective.

VL, Gemco, and Phil Stockford aren't the only suppliers of roller brake testers. Their competitors include Auto Workshop Equipment Services, which supplies EWJ Teknic testers from Denmark.

Simpson points to an important difference between truck and PSV brake testing. VOSA imposes a simulated load on the former, but not the latter. "If they did that with PSVs I supposed we'd have to load them with sandbags or some other type of weight," he observes.

Test failures can of course occur simply because the vehicle's brakes haven't been maintained properly says Tim Ford, UK sales manager at Knorr-Bremse.

"The operator may assume that an automatic slack adjuster is working, but they wear out, and should be checked every time you look at the spring brake," he observes. "If the torque level is below the minimum value,

then the slack adjuster should be changed.

"When you examine the spring brake, take a look at the push rod that emerges from it and connects it to the slack adjuster," he continues. "If it's too short, then you won't be getting full braking efficiency."

"Remember that with drum brakes, the lining must match the drum profile. If the drum is out of shape, then the lining will not contact it properly."

"It could be the case that the brakes haven't been relined recently, and that the lining is down to the rivets when the bus or coach goes to be tested," says Copelin. "A seal might have gone, dripping oil onto the linings, or you could have a seized or badly worn brake cam."

Imbalance is the most common reason for failing a PSV because of brake problems says Simpson.

"You may have a good lining on one side of the vehicle, but a poor one on the other, or a drum may have gone out of shape," Copelin adds.

"Checking disc brakes is of course very easy because you can instantly see if the pads have worn down," Ford notes.

Ford is concerned that some operators are in the habit of simply changing components and hoping for the best without attempting to diagnose the fault properly. "You can have a

situation for instance where the immediate reaction is to change a spring brake, only to find the vehicle passes the service brake test, but fails the parking brake test because there's something wrong elsewhere in the system," he observes.

"That can be a very expensive approach to maintenance. Jumping to conclusions usually ends up costing operators a lot of money."

Using a roller brake tester isn't the only way of testing brakes. Smaller operators who either cannot afford it or do not have ready access to one may need to resort to other means of checking them prior to submitting their vehicles for test.

Bowmonk, for example, offers a portable battery-powered device called BrakeCheck that can determine the efficiency of both the service brake and the parking brake by measuring deceleration. Turnkey Instruments markets portable testers such as g-meter and BrakeSafe.



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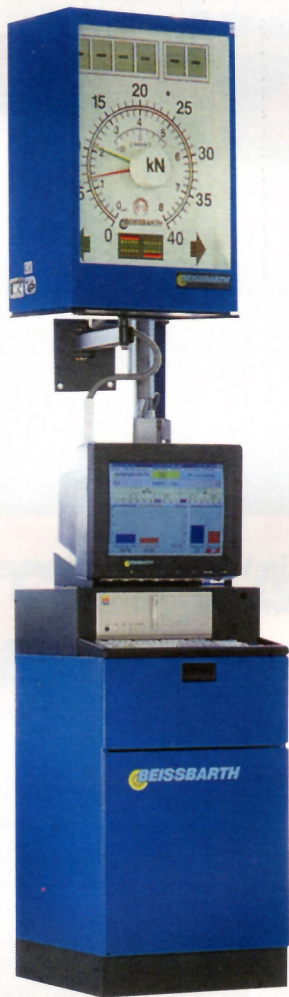
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Illuminating Information

Amongst the latest developments in destination equipment is Warrington's use of digital LED displays to help passengers with disabilities. **Steve Banner** reports.

People with eyesight difficulties in Warrington who want to use the bus are having their lives made a whole lot easier by the local authority. The 262 bus shelters installed by Adshel over the past four years each feature the name of the stop in 6-inch high black-on-yellow lettering to make it easier for partially-sighted people to read, along with the council's logo.

So far around 150 of the shelters boast real-time information systems. Passengers with poor or non-existent sight can use a personal touch-key to activate an audible version of what's on the display.

"The assistance provided doesn't stop there" says Warrington Borough Transport marketing director, Nigel Featham. Light Emitting Diode – LED destination displays are being specified on all new buses, and the operator has gone for the maximum possible character

size.

"Power-operated printed blinds are fine during daylight hours, but LED displays are more clearly visible in gloomy weather and after dark," he says. "In those situations they beat the printed blinds we've traditionally favoured hands-down."

LEDs are also being used to show the route numbers on the sides of new vehicles.

What about the argument that bright sunlight can at times render LED panels almost invisible? "So far it's not been a problem on the ones we've fitted," Featham replies.

"We looked at having flip-dot panels fitted, but we weren't happy about their reliability," he says. "Dots can get stuck, and that spoils the display's appearance. What's more, flip-dot displays aren't as bright as LED panels at night."

Eighteen of Warrington's 117 buses now sport LED destination signs, and the 12 new ones

scheduled to join the fleet during the course of this year will have them too. "We're also thinking about fitting LED displays to 28 of our existing vehicles," he says.

"That could be an expensive exercise, but you have to counterbalance the cost against the fact that LED signs are effectively maintenance-free."

Featham and his colleagues work closely with Warrington Disability Partnership to ensure that they fully understand the needs of people with disabilities.

"We give special training to all our staff," he says. "The course involves wearing special goggles that simulate sight defects. Our drivers have proved particularly enthusiastic about this training, and it's helped them build up a relationship with blind and partially-sighted people who are bus users."

The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) remains concerned however about the legibility of LED panels

in bright light. "It's something we are conscious of," says a spokesman. "LEDs may not be the best means of displaying information."

Looking back over the last five years, Bright-Tech Developments sales director John Stormont, says that he cannot recall a single instance of LED bus displays being criticised for being difficult to read in strong sunshine.

"This might happen momentarily, but it will only be momentarily because the vehicle is constantly moving," he says. "What's more, modern LED signs adjust themselves automatically to compensate for bright light."

They can do so because they're fitted with ambient light sensors, points out Hanover Displays marketing manager Nick Robertson. "Our displays can be louvered too," he says.

"We've certainly not had visibility in sunlight raised as an issue by our customers," says

■ **Continued on page 34**



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"Power-operated printed blinds are fine during daylight hours, but LED displays are more clearly visible in gloomy weather and after dark. In those situations they beat the printed blinds we've traditionally favoured hands-down."

Nigel Featham,
Warrington Borough
Transport.



Vultron International managing director, John Moorhouse.

"I suppose printed blinds are easier to read, at least during daylight hours, but that may in part be due to the simple fact that people are used to them," Stormont comments. "After all, they've been around for a long time."

"Transport for London (TfL) still favours printed blinds, but that's probably because buses in London have got so much information to display," says Moorhouse. "That can't be done so easily on an LED panel."

"Printed blinds give you the best clarity, but they have to be motorised for driver acceptability," says Indicators International general manager Tom Diamond.

"At night though LEDs really come into their own," contends Stormont. "You can clearly see the display before you see the vehicle's livery. One of the problems with printed blinds is that the tubes used to illuminate them, gradually get dim, and can of course fail."

Day or night, Bright-Tech is improving the legibility of its displays by packing more LEDs into them. "It's now economic

to do so because LEDs have fallen in price dramatically," Stormont explains. "When we first introduced LED displays we offered one for the side of a bus that was 90 LEDs long by 8 deep – 720 in all – and it cost £615. Contained within the same size of frame, its successor is 120 LEDs long by 12 deep – 2,640 in all – and costs £795. The number of LEDs used has almost quadrupled, but the price certainly hasn't."

Boosting the number of LEDs in side displays is particularly important because it should ensure that they don't look distorted; a criticism that's been levelled at them in the past.

Sales of flip-dot signs have now almost ground to a halt, says Stormont. "LED panels are far lighter in weight, so much so that I can carry one incorporating 4,500 LEDs into a meeting under my arm," he observes. "Such displays are as shallow as a 50p piece too, which makes them easy to install, and they're remarkably reliable because they've got no moving parts. That makes it possible to offer them with at least a 10-year warranty."

"Nor are they power hungry," he continues. "They draw no more

than 3 to 4 amps, so you'd have to leave one on all the time for at least two days with the vehicle's engine not running before you did the battery any real harm."

"With LED displays you don't have to change a fluorescent tube every so often," says Moorhouse. "I don't know of any operator who has gone back to flip-dots having experienced LEDs. In fact we're no longer supplying new flip-dot displays – just the spares. I think they've had their day."

"To be honest I don't think there is much future for flip-dot technology in the UK," says Vincent McKenna of McKenna Brothers.

Robertson doesn't go quite that far, but he agrees that flip-dots aren't as popular as they were. "Around 80 per cent of our output nowadays is LED-based," he says.

LED panels are easy to programme too, stresses Stormont. "You can edit your destination list on a PC in the office and download it onto a flash card the size of a postage stamp," he says. "A thousand destinations would present no problem."

"We've got many customers who would prefer to use printed blinds, but their in-house

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■ Bright-Tech LED displays for EYMS (above) and Reading (right).



We've recently fulfilled a big order from Northern Ireland. Older bus passengers much prefer printed displays and I'm sure printed blinds don't get as dirty as they used to.

**Terry Rawlins,
Norbury Blinds.**



■ Continued on page 36

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■ Malcolm Randles (left) and Vincent McKenna (right) show off their latest Smartblind Concept.



■ Hanover LED displays on Courtney Coaches' Solo.

accountants are telling them that LED panels work out cheaper," says McKenna. "We've seen LED display sales double in recent times."

He's sure that powered printed blinds have a future however. He points to the number of operators who use LED displays on the sides of their vehicles, but printed blinds on the front and back.

"We've just introduced a powered system with a sensor that detects if a blind is getting dirty, and adjusts the sensor that selects the destination to compensate for the fact," he says.

McKenna Brothers along with Mobitec are despatching their latest product, Smartblind to Scania OmniCity vehicles for Metrobus.

The traditional destination blinds are used in conjunction with state-of-the-art electronic technology to produce the 'intelligent roller blind system'.

The robust units are constructed using lightweight rigid anodised aluminium profile with a toughened front glass to avoid dust and static problems. The system incorporates intelligent adaptive sensing which helps to ensure accurate blind positioning.

"If the blind does get dirty with age the system can detect this and adapt the sensor to compensate," says Vincent McKenna. "Also the width of the code takes into account that a blind can move from side to side as it is rolling to the next display. The system also has a manual over-ride option as backup."

McKenna recognises that there are occasions when major route changes dictate new or modified blinds, which is where Smartblind comes in. Destination blinds can be changed in the vehicle or by removing the inner chassis to a bench. This allows easier working conditions for the garage staff.

When route changes are made the existing text and graphics can be easily updated using a conventional PC and saved to a smart card. This card is inserted into the drivers control unit, which reads the stored destination text and transfers them to the internal memory.

"We have taken great care in producing what we feel is the highest quality, fully compliant and easily programmed electronic roller blind system available today," adds McKenna.

Terry Rawlins of Norbury Blinds also believes that printed blinds

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aren't dead yet. "We've recently fulfilled a big order from Northern Ireland. Older bus passengers much prefer printed displays and I'm sure printed blinds don't get as dirty as they used to."

There still seems to be a strong demand for printed blinds both on their own and in combination with LEDs.



MAN/Noge coach with high intensity LED displays.



We looked at having flip-dot panels fitted, but we weren't happy about their reliability. Dots can get stuck, and that spoils the display's appearance. What's more, flip-dot displays aren't as bright as LED panels at night.

Nigel Featham, Warrington Borough Transport.



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Four Plaxton Pronto minibuses are now in service with the London Borough of Havering. Says Havering's transport commissioning unit manager, Allen Burbidge: "With the Prontos we are moving away from ambulance-type buses to vehicles which offer a better travel experience and greater dignity for those who travel with us." The Prontos join a 54-strong fleet of accessible vehicles.



The launch by Nexus of new U Call services in the Sunderland Coalfields area has seen Classic Coaches expand its fleet of low-floor Mercedes-Benz Sprinters, with two new vehicles joining four already in operation. Funded under the government's Rural Bus Challenge, the vehicles operate 16 hours a day offering a mixture of timetabled and demand-responsive services.



A further two 70-seat Plaxton Profile B7Rs - along with a standard 57-seater - have joined the expanding fleet of high-capacity single-deckers operated by Moffat & Williamson of Gaudry, Fife. The new vehicles are replacing double-deckers on school contracts and private hires, and the company's once large fleet of double-deck buses has now been reduced to just four.



Stagecoach in the Cotswolds, based at Stroud, has taken delivery of its first two Optare Solos, chosen for a hilly route, much used by elderly passengers. The buses are 8.5m 27-seaters and are part of a Stagecoach Group order for 100 Solos being introduced nationwide.



Following the success of its VDL SB200 Commanders, Claribel Coaches of Birmingham has chosen a VDL DB250 for its first double-decker. It has an East Lancs body. Features include 77 seats with lap belts, CCTV, and radio/pa. The optional four-speed Voith D854.3 automatic gearbox has been chosen along with a 249bhp engine to maintain higher speeds on longer journeys.



The biggest vehicle in the fleet of ABC Coaches of Swinton, Manchester, is this 39-seat Optare Solera, which is fitted with air-conditioning, fridge and DVD player. It takes ABC's fleet to eight. It's the company's first Optare and was bought to meet growing demand from customers for a larger coach. "The response has been good," says ABC's Stuart Bowe.



The latest delivery to Norfolk operator D&H Harrod marks two firsts for the fleet. It is the company's first Iveco, and also its first current-generation stainless-steel Plaxton Paragon. "We've specified the coach as a 57-seater for excursion and private hire work," says Harrod's David Reeve. "It gives passengers on local trips a high-quality coach."



Croydon-based coach operator, Mayday Travel, has added 10 new Toyota Optimo V midcoaches to its fleet - consisting of eight 21-seat and two 26-seat variants. Both come fully equipped with the latest technology, including TV, video with LCD screens, DVD, air-con and a drinks machine. Toyota also fitted seats with three-point seatbelts.



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Bravo	RV	12.0	6.0	MAN D2866	12.0	460	ZF 8S-180	8 M	-	315/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	24t	19.2
Bravo Plus	RV	13.75	-	MAN D2866	12.0	460	ZF 8S-180	8 M	-	315/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	26t	17.7
Atlantis	RV	12.0	6.15	MAN D2866	12.0	360	ZF 6HP600	5 A	-	-	-	18t	-
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Schoolbus 1100FE	FV	10.7	5.85	Cummins ISBe	3.9	150	Allison 2000	4 A	190	265/70R 19.5	Drum/Drum	12t	12.5
Falcon 1100	RV	11m	5.85	Cummins ISBe	3.9	185	Voith D854.3	4 A	200	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	17t	10.9
Hawk	RV	8.5m	3.9	Cummins ISBe	3.9	135	Voith D854.3	4 A	190	245/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	12t	11.3
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Futura FHD12.340XE	RV	12	6.09	DAF XE	12.6	340	ZF 6S-1600 HGS	6 M	745	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	18.9
Futura FHD12.380XE	RV	12	6.09	DAF XE	12.6	380	ZF 6S-1600 HGS	6 M	745	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	21.1
Futura FHD13.340XE	RV	12.7	6.8	DAF XE	12.6	340	ZF 6S-1600 HGS	6 M	745	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	18.9
Futura FHD13.380XE	RV	12.7	6.8	DAF XE	12.6	380	ZF 6S-1600 HGS	6 M	745	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	21.1
Futura FHD14.430XE	RV	13.58	6.09	DAF XE	12.6	430	ZF 8S-180 HGS	8 M	745	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	24.45t	17.6
Futura FHD15.430XE	RV	15	6.8	DAF XE	12.6	430	ZF 8S-180 HGS	8 M	745	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Drum	24.45t	17.6
Magiq HD122.340.XE	RV	12.2	6.15	DAF XE	12.6	340	ZF 6S-1600 HGS	6 M	774	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	18.9
Magiq HD122.380.XE	RV	12.2	6.15	DAF XE	12.6	380	ZF 6S-1600 HGS	6 M	774	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	21.1
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Dart SLF	RV	9.3	4.40	Cummins ISBe	3.9	135	Allison 2000	4 A	220	245/70R 19.5	Drum/Drum	11t	12.3
Dart SLF	RV	10.1	5.20	Cummins ISBe	3.9	135	Allison 2000	4 A	220	245/70R 19.5	Drum/Drum	11t	12.3
Dart SLF	RV	10.7	5.81	Cummins ISBe	3.9	150	Allison 2000	4 A	220	245/70R 19.5	Drum/Drum	11.5t	13.0
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Enviro200	RV	10.4	5.52	Cummins ISBe	3.9	150	Voith DV500	3 A	250	245/70R 19.5*	Disc/Disc	12.9t	11.6
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Enviro300	RV	12.0	6.17	Cummins ISBe	5.9	220	ZF 5HP502	5 A	250	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	14.4t	15.3
Enviro300	RV	12.5	6.69	Cummins ISBe	5.9	220	ZF 5HP502	5 A	250	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	14.4t	15.3
*Enviro200 rear wheels/tyres 315/60R 22.5; Enviro300 gearbox options - Allison T280, Voith D854.3, ZF 6HP502													
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Trident	RV	10.6	5.95	Cummins ISCe	8.3	225	Voith D854.3	4 A	275	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	12.5
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DailyBus 50C 13	FV	7.2	4.35	Iveco 8140.43S	2.8	125	ZF S6-300	6 M	90	195/75R 16	Disc/Disc	5.4t	23.1
DailyBus 65C 15	FV	7.2	4.35	Iveco 8140.43N	2.8	146	ZF S6-300	6 M	90	225/75R 16	Disc/Disc	6.5t	22.5
DailyBus 65C 15	FV	8.1	4.75	Iveco 8140.43N	2.8	146	ZF S6-300	6 M	90	225/75R 16	Disc/Disc	6.5t	22.5
Daily Logo	FV	8.5	5.04	Iveco 8140.43N	2.8	146	ZF S6-300	6 M	-	225/75R 16	Disc/Disc	7t	20.9
Scolabus 24	FV	12.0	6.57	Iveco Tector F4A	5.9	240	Allison MD3060	6 A	280	295/70R 19.5	Disc/Drum	15t	16.0
EuroMidi	FV	8.4	4.63	Iveco Tector F4A	5.9	210	Iveco 2855.6	6 M	200	225/75R 17.5	Disc/Disc	10t	21.0
MidiRider coach	RV	9.8	4.32	Iveco Tector F4A	5.9	264	ZF S6-85	6 M	200	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Drum	-	-
EuroRider	RV	12.0	6.15	Iveco Cursor 8	7.8	352	ZF 6S-1600	6M	467	295/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	19.5
Gearbox option - EuroRider ZF 5HP592 automatic													
Coach distributors: Plaxton Coach Sales, UK Coach & Bus													
MAN Neoman Bus UK, Frankland Road, Blagrove, Swindon SN5 8YU Tel 01793 448356 Fax 01793 485260 www.neoman.co.uk													
Bus													
12.220 NL	RV	10.7	5.2	MAN D0826	6.9	220	Voith D851.3	4 A	150	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Drum	12t	18.3
14.220 NL	RV	11.3	5.8	MAN D0826	6.9	220	Voith D851.3	4 A	150	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Drum	14t	15.7
Gearbox option - ZF 4HP502													
18.220 NL	RV	12.0	5.88	MAN D0826	6.9	220	Voith D851.3	3 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	18t	12.2
Coach													
12.220	RV	10.0	4.7	MAN D0826	6.9	220	ZF S6-36	6 M	150	255/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	12.8t	17.2
14.280	RV	11.5	-	MAN D0836	6.9	280	ZF S6-1600	6 M	-	285/70R 19.5	Disc/Drum	14t	20.0
18.310	RV	12.0	-	MAN D2866	12.0	310	ZF S6-85	6 M	235	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18.2t	17.2
18.360	RV	12.0	-	MAN D2866	12.0	360	ZF S6-85	6 M	235	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18.2t	20.0
24.410	RV	12.0	5.35	MAN D2866	12.0	410	ZF 8S-180	8 M	-	315/80R 22.5	Drum/Drum	24t	17.1
Coach distributors: BASE, Mentor Coach & Bus, Salvador Caetano (UK)													
MERCEDES-BENZ EvoBus (UK) Ltd, Ashcroft Way, Crosspoint Business Park, Coventry CV2 2SR Tel 02476 626000 Fax 02476 626006 www.evobus.co.uk													
Vario 0814D	FV	6.94	4.25	Mercedes OM904LA	4.25	136	ZF 5S-42	5 M	125	205/75R 17.5	Disc/Disc	7.5t	18.1
Vario 0814D	FV	7.49	4.80	Mercedes OM904LA	4.25	136	ZF 5S-42	5 M	125	205/75R 17.5	Disc/Disc	7.5t	18.1
Engine option - 152 bhp rating in 0815D. Gearbox option - Allison AT542 automatic													
OC500 Touro	RH	12.0	6.25	Mercedes OM457HLA	12.0	354	Mercedes G190	6 M	400	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	19.7
Gearbox option - ZF 5HP602 automatic													
Citaro 0.530	RH	12.0	5.85	Mercedes OM906HLA	6.4	231	ZF 5HP502	5 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Disc	-	-
Citaro 0.530G	RV	18.0	-	Mercedes OM906HLA	6.4	279	ZF 5HP502	5 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Disc	28t	9.9
Gearbox option - Voith four-speed automatic													
Atego 12.23L	FV	9.95	4.84	Mercedes OM906LA	6.4	230	Mercedes G85	6 M	210	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	12t	19.2

CHASSIS AND INTEGRALS

Make and model	Engine Position	Overall Length (m)	Wheelbase (m)	Engine	Cubic Capacity (litres)	Max Power (bhp)	Gearbox	Speeds	Fuel tank (litres)	Wheel/tire size	Brakes front/rear	Max GVW	Power/Weight ratio
NEOPLAN integral Mentor Coach & Bus, Euroway Estate, Hellaby, Rotherham S66 8QL Tel 01709 700600 Fax 01709 700007 www.mentorplc.com													
Euroliner N313SHD	RV	10.6	5.2	Mercedes OM441LA	11.9	290	ZF 6S-1600	6 M	425	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	16.1
Euroliner N316SHD	RV	12.0	5.8	Mercedes OM441LA	11.9	340	ZF 6S-1600	6 M	425	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	18.9
Euroliner N316SHDL	RV	13.7	6.35	MAN D2860	11.9	410	ZF ASTronic	12 M	425	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	26t	15.8
Starliner N516SHD	RV	12.0	5.55	Mercedes OM402LA	12.8	381	ZF 8S-180C	8 M	425	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	25.5t	14.9
Starliner N516SHDL	RV	13.9	6.35	MAN D2860	11.9	410	ZF 8S-180C	8 M	460	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	26t	15.8
Engine option - 460bhp rating. Gearbox option - ZF ASTronic													
Skyliner N122/3 dd	RV	12.0	5.55	Mercedes OM402LA	12.8	381	ZF 8S - 180C	8 M	620	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	25.5t	14.9
Skyliner N122/3 dd	RV	12.0	5.55	MAN D2866	11.9	400	ZF 8S - 180C	8 M	620	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	25.5t	15.7
Skyliner N122/3L dd	RV	13.7	5.55	MAN D2876	11.9	460	ZF ASTronic	12 M	620	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	26t	17.7
OPTARE integral Optare Ltd, Manston Lane, Leeds LS15 8SU Tel 0113 264 5182 Fax 0113 260 6635 www.optare.com													
Alero AL01-4	FV	7.2	4.8	Iveco 8140.43	2.8	125	ZF6S-300	6M	70/120	205/75R 17.5	Disc/Disc	6t	
Gearbox Option - ZF4HP22, four speed automatic													
Solo M780	RV	7.8	4.83	Mercedes OM904LA	4.25	122	Allison 2000	5 A	200	215/175R 17.5	Disc/Disc	10.5t	11.6
Solo M850	RV	8.5	5.53	Mercedes OM904LA	4.25	122	Allison 2000	5 A	200	215/175R 17.5	Disc/Disc	10.5t	11.6
Solo M920	RV	9.2	6.23	Mercedes OM904LA	4.25	122	Allison 2000	5 A	200	215/175R 17.5	Disc/Disc	10.5t	11.6
Solo M990	RV	9.9	6.93	Mercedes OM904LA	4.25	122	Allison 2000	5 A	200	215/175R 17.5	Disc/Disc	10.5t	11.6
Engine option - Mercedes 147bhp; Cummins ISBe 185bhp													
Tempo X1060	RV	10.57	4.95	Mercedes OM904LA	6.4	241	ZF6HP500	6 A	200	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	17.0t	14.2
Tempo X1130	RV	11.28	5.66	Mercedes OM904LA	6.4	241	ZF6HP500	6 A	200	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	17.0t	14.2
Tempo X1200	RV	11.99	6.37	Mercedes OM904LA	6.4	241	ZF6HP500	6 A	200	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	17.0t	14.2
Tempo X1260	RV	12.60	6.99	Mercedes OM904LA	6.4	241	ZF6HP500	6 A	200	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	17.0t	14.2
Engine option - Mercedes 275bhp. Gearbox option: Allison T310R five speed automatic													
SCANIA Scania Bus and Coach UK Ltd, Claylands Avenue, Worsop S81 7DJ Tel 01909 500822 Fax 01909 500165 www.scania.com													
K94IB 4x2	RV	12.0	5.83	Scania DC 902	9.0	260	Scania GR801R CS	7 M	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc	19.5t	13.3
(S-kool Coach only)	RV	12.0	5.83	Scania DC 903	9.0	300	ZF 5HP592C N	5 A	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc	19.5t	15.4
K114EB/IB 4x2	RV	12.0	5.83	Scania DC 1104	10.6	340	Scania GR801R CS/OC	7/8 M	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc	19.5t	17.4
K114EB 4x2	RV	12.2	6.13	Scania DC 1104	10.6	380	Scania GR801R CS/OC	7/8 M	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc	19.5t	19.5
K114EB/IB 6x2	RV	12.0	6.85	Scania DC 1104	10.6	340	Scania GR801R CS/OC	7/8 M	546	315/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	25.0t	15.2
Gearbox option - ZF5HP602 automatic on K114													
K114EB 6x2*4	RV	13.5	8.15	Scania DC 1104	10.6	380	ZF 5HP602C HT	5 A	610	315/80R 22.5	Disc	26.5t	14.3
K124EB/IB 4x2	RV	12.0	5.83	Scania DC 1202	12.0	420	Scania GR801R CS/OC	7/8 M	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc	19.5t	21.5
K124EB 6x2	RV	12.0	7.02	Scania DC 1202	12.0	420	Scania GR801R CS/OC	7/8 M	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc/Drum	25.0t	21.5
K124EB 6x2*4	RV	12.8	7.24	Scania DC 1202	12.0	420	Scania GR801R CS/OC	8 M	465	315/80R 22.5	Disc	26.5t	14.3
K124EB 6x2*4	RV	13.5	8.15	Scania DC 1202	12.0	420	Scania GR801R CS/OC	8 M	610	315/80R 22.5	Disc	26.5t	14.3
L94UB 4x2	RV	12.0	6.0	Scania DC 901	9.0	230	ZF 5HP502C NBS	5 A	290	275/70R 22.5	Disc	19.1t	12.1
L94UA 6x2/2	RV	18.0	-	Scania DC 902	9.0	260	ZF 5HP592C NBS	5 A	345	275/70R 22.5	Disc	28.6t	9.1
N94UB 4x2	RV	10.6	5.3	Scania DC 901	9.0	230	ZF 5HP502C NBS	5 A	365	275/70R 22.5	Disc	19.1t	12.1
N94UD 4x2	RV	10.6	5.3	Scania DC 902	9.0	260	ZF 5HP592C NBS	5 A	260	275/70R 22.5	Disc	19.1t	13.6
N94UD 4x2	RV	12.0	6.0	Scania DC 902	9.0	260	ZF 5HP592C NBS	5 A	260	275/70R 22.5	Disc	19.1t	13.6
CN94UB 4x2 Omni City	RV	12.0	6.0	Scania DC 901	9.0	230	ZF 5HP502C NBS	5 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Disc	19.1t	12.1
CN94UB 6x2/2 Omni City	RV	18.0	-	Scania DC 902	9.0	260	ZF 5HP592C NBS	5 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Disc	28.6t	9.1
SETRA integral EvoBus (UK) Ltd, Ashcroft Way, Crosspoint Business Park, Coventry CV2 2SR. Tel 02476 626000 Fax 02476 626006 www.evobus.co.uk													
S315 GT HD	RV	12.0	6.08	Mercedes OM457LA	12.0	422	Mercedes GO190	6M	535	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	-	-
S315 GT HD	RV	12.0	6.08	Mercedes OM457LA	12.0	422	ZF ASTronic	12M	535	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	-	-
S415 HD	RV	12.0	6.08	Mercedes OM457LA	12.0	422	Mercedes GO190	6M	570	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	-	-
S415 HD	RV	12.0	6.08	Mercedes OM457LA	12.0	422	ZF ASTronic	12M	570	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	-	-
TOYOTA Toyota GB plc, Great Burgh, Burgh Heath, Epsom, Surrey KT18 5UX Tel 01737 363633 Fax 01737 367730													
Optimo V	FV	7.6	3.94	Toyota 15 B FTE	4.1	135	Toyota	6 M	-	205/75R 17.5	Disc/Drum	6.7t	21.4
Coach distributors: A&D Coach Sales, Salvador Caetano UK, Holloway Commercials													
VAN HOOL Van Hool NV, Bernard Van Hoolstraat 58, B-2500 Lier, Belgium Tel 00 32 3 420 20 20 Fax 00 32 3 482 33 60 www.vanhool.be													
T917 Astron	RV	13.85	6.7	MAN D2866	12.0	460	ZF ASTronic	12 M	735	315/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	-	-
VDL BUS Arriva Bus & Coach, Lodge Garage, Whitehall Road West, Gomersal, Cleckheaton BD19 4BJ Tel 01274 681144 Fax 01274 651198													
DB250 RS	RV	9.9	5.05	DAF PE183C	9.2	218	Voith D851.3	3 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	17.4t	12.5
DB250 RS	RV	10.3	5.45	DAF PE183C	9.2	218	Voith D851.3	3 A	300	275/70R 22.5	Drum/Drum	17.4t	12.5
Engine option - 249bhp rating. Gearbox options - ZF 4HP500, 5HP500, Voith D854.3													
SB120	RV	9.4	4.3	Cummins ISBe	3.9	135	Allison AT545	4 A	250	245/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	11.5t	11.7
SB120	RV	10.2	5.2	Cummins ISBe	3.9	135	Allison AT545	4 A	250	245/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	11.5t	11.7
SB120	RV	10.8	5.8	Cummins ISBe	3.9	150	Allison AT545	4 A	250	245/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	11.5t	13.0
SB200	RV	11.8	6.0	Cummins ISBe	5.9	185	Voith D851.3	4 A	250	265/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	14.4t	12.8
SB4000PF	RV	12.0		DAF PE228C	9.2	310	ZF 5HP592	5 A	430	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	17.2
SB4000XF	RV	12.0		DAF XE250C	12.6	340	ZF 5HP602	5 A	430	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	18.9
SB4000+ 3 axle	RV	12.0+		DAF XE250C	12.6	350	ZF 5HP602	5 A		195/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	24t	14.6
VOLVO Volvo Bus Ltd, Wedgcock Lane, Warwick CV34 5YA Tel 01926 401777 Fax 01926 407407 www.volvobuses.volvo.co.uk													
B7R	RV	12.0	6.30	Volvo D7C	7.3	275	ZF 6HP550	6 A	300	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	15.3
Engine option - 290bhp rating. Gearbox option - Volvo EGS													
B7TL dd	RV	9.8	5.2	Volvo D7C	7.3	215	ZF 5HP502	5 A	270	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	11.9
B7TL dd	RV	10.3	5.7	Volvo D7C	7.3	215	ZF 5HP502	5 A	270	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	11.9
Engine option - 250bhp rating. Gearbox option - Voith D863.3													
B9TL 3-axle dd	RV	12.0+		Volvo D9C	9	340	ZF 6HP592	6 A	-	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	23t	14.8
B7L sd	RV	12.0	6.0	Volvo D7C	7.3	215	ZF 5HP502	5 A	-	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18t	11.9
Engine option - 250bhp rating.													
B7LA	RV	18.0		Volvo D7C	7.3	275	ZF 5HP592	5 A		275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	28t	9.8
B7RLE	RV	12.0		Volvo D7C	7.3	275	ZF 5HP502	5 A	270	275/70R 22.5	Disc/Drum	18.9t	11.9
Merit	RV	10.8	5.8	Cummins ISBe	3.9	150	Allison AT545	4 A	250	245/70R 19.5	Disc/Disc	11.5t	13.0
B12M	UH	12.0	6.20	Volvo DH12D	12.1	340	ZF6S-1600	6 M	450	315/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	18.9
B12B	RH	12.0		Volvo DH12D	12.1	340	Volvo EGS-V/VR	8 M	600	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	18t	18.9
B12B 3 axle	RH	13.7		Volvo DH12D	12.1	340	Volvo EGS-V/VR	8 M	600	295/80R 22.5	Disc/Disc	24t	14.2
Engine options - 380 and 420bhp ratings. Gearbox options - ZF 5HP602 (B12M and B12B 340); Volvo I-Shift (B12M, B12B)													
Coach distributors: Salvador Caetano (UK), Moseley (PCV), Moseley in the South, Moseley Distributors, Plaxton Coach Sales, Volvo Coach Sales													

BODIES

Manufacturer
and model

Structure

Nominal
Length

Body Type

Chassis
availability

ALEXANDER Alexander Dennis, 91 Glasgow Road, Falkirk FK1 4JB Tel 01324 621672 Fax 01324 632469

Pointer 2	Aluminium	8.8-11.4m	LF Midi	Dennis Dart SLF
ALX400	Aluminium	10.5m	LF DD	VDL DB250LF, Dennis Trident, Volvo B7TL

BERKHOF VDL Berkhof Valkenswaard, PO Box 585, 5550 AN Valkenswaard, De Vest 55, 5555 XP Valkenswaard, The Netherlands Tel 00 31 40 208 2424 Fax 00 31 40 208 2425 www.vdlberkhof.com

Axial 50	Steel	12m	3.55m coach	Volvo B12M, B12B
Axial 70	Steel	12m	3.7m coach	Volvo B12M, B12B
Axial 100	Steel	12-13.5m	4m DD coach	Scania K114, K124, Volvo B12B

Coach Distributor: Volvo Coach Sales, Scania Bus and Coach UK

BEULAS UK Coach & Bus, Sandbeck Way, Hellaby, Rotherham S66 8QL Tel 01709 705570 Fax 01709 705569 www.uk-cb.com

Midi-Star	Steel	9.8m	3.4m coach	Iveco MidiRider
Stergo E	Steel	12m	3.56m coach	Iveco EuroRider
El Mundo	Steel	12m	3.8m coach	Iveco EuroRider

CAETANO Salvador Caetano (UK) Ltd, Mill Lane, Heather, Leicestershire LE67 2QE Tel 01530 263333 Fax 01530 263379 www.caetano.co.uk

Optimo V	Steel	7.5m	Midicoach	Toyota
Enigma	Steel	9.8m	3.2m coach	MAN 14.280
Enigma	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	Dennis R410, Volvo B12B, MAN 18.310

EAST LANCES East Lancashire Coachbuilders Ltd, Lower Phillips Road, Whitebirk Industrial Estate, Blackburn BB1 5UD, Tel 01254 504150 Fax 01254 504181 www.elcb.co.uk

Mylleennium	Alusuisse	8.8-12m	LF SD	Dennis Dart, MAN 14.220, Scania N94
Lolyne	Alusuisse	10.0-10.5m	LF DD	Dennis Trident
Vyking	Alusuisse	10.0-10.5m	LF DD	Volvo B7TL
Mylleennium LowLander	Alusuisse	10.3-12m	LF DD	VDL Bus DB250
OmniDekka	Alusuisse	10.6-12m	LF DD	Scania N94

EURO COACHBUILDERS Derrybeg Industrial Estate, Gweedore, Co Donegal, Ireland Tel 00 353 75 31528 Fax 00 353 75 31930 www.eurocoachbuilders.ie

LX	Steel	8.3m	Midicoach	Mercedes Vario
V29/Pantera	Steel	8.3m	Midicoach	Mercedes Vario
Clady	Steel	10.3m	Coach	Mercedes Atego 1223L
School Bus	Steel	10.3m	SD	Mercedes Atego 1223L
E Lances Myllennium	Aluminium	8.8m	LF SD	TransBus Dart

Coach Distributor: Taylors PCV Sales

HISPANO Volvo Bus Ltd, Wedgcock Lane, Warwick CV34 5YA Tel 01926 401777 Fax 01926 407407 www.volvobuses.volvo.co.uk

Habit	S'less Steel	12-18m	LF SD	Volvo B7L, B7LA
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INDCAR UK Coach & Bus, Sandbeck Way, Hellaby, Rotherham S66 8QL Tel 01709 705570 Fax 01709 705569 www.uk-cb.com

Maxim 2	Steel	8.4m	Midicoach	Iveco EuroMidi
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IRIZAR Scania Bus and Coach UK Ltd, Claylands Avenue, Worksop S81 7DJ Tel 01909 500822 Fax 01909 500165

Intercentury	Steel	12m	3.2m coach	Scania K114
Century Style	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	Scania K114
Century Club	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	Scania K124
Century Topline	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	Scania K124
PB	Steel	12.2m	3.5m coach	Scania K124
S-Kool	Steel	12m	3.2m school coach	Scania K94

JONCKHEERE Volvo Coach Sales, Brisco Avenue, Loughborough LE11 5HP Tel 01509 217777 Fax 01509 260978 www.jonckheere.be

Mistral 30	Steel	12m	3.2m coach	Volvo B7R
Mistral 50	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	Volvo B12M, B12B
Mistral 70	Steel	13.7m	3.7m coach	Volvo B12B

BODY TYPES: DD DOUBLE-DECK; SD CONVENTIONAL SINGLE-DECK, LF LOW-FLOOR



BODIES

Manufacturer
and model

Structure

Nominal
Length

Body Type

Chassis
availability

MARCOPOLLO

BASE, Sandy Way, Holmeswood, Ormskirk, Lancashire L40 1UB
Tel 01254 685599 www.basecoachsales.co.uk

Viaggio 330	Steel	9.9m	3.3m coach	MAN 12.220
Viaggio 330	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	MAN 18.310, VDL Bus SB4000
Viaggio 350	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	MAN 18.310, 18.360, VDL Bus SB4000
Viaggio 370	Steel	12m	3.7m coach	MAN 24.410

MCV

MCV Bus and Coach, Stirling Place, Elean Business Park, Sutton, Ely CB6 2QE
Tel 01353 773000 Fax 01353 773001

Evolution	S'less steel	9.8-10.2m	LF SD	MAN 12.220
Evolution	S'less steel	11.2m	LF SD	MAN 14.220

NOGE

Mentor Coach & Bus, Euroway Estate, Hellaby, Rotherham S66 8QL
Tel 01709 700600 Fax 01709 700007 www.mentorplc.com

Catalan 320	Steel	10m	3.2m midi-coach	MAN 13.220
Catalan 350	Steel	12m	3.5m coach	MAN 18.310, 18.350
Catalan 370	Steel	12m	3.7m coach	MAN 24.410

OPTARE

Optare Ltd, Manston Lane, Leeds LS15 8SU
Tel 0113 264 5182 Fax 0113 260 6635 www.optare.com

Bonito	Steel	6.7m	Minicoach	Ford Transit FT 350EL
Soroco	Steel	6.5m	Minicoach	Mercedes Benz Sprinter
Soroco Plus	Steel	7.7m	MidiCoach	Mercedes Benz Sprinter
Nouvelle	Steel	8.4m	MidiCoach	Mercedes Benz Vario
Solera Corta	Steel	8.3m	Coach	Mercedes Benz Atego 12.23L
Solera SR	Steel	9.95m	Coach	Mercedes Benz Atego 12.23L

Coach distributors: AWCS, Bob Vale, Holloway Commercials, Yorks.

PLAXTON

Plaxton, Eastfield, Scarborough YO11 3BY
Tel: 01723 581500 Fax: 01723 581328

Beaver 2	Steel	7.8-8.5m	Midi	Mercedes Vario
Cheetah	Steel	8.5m	Midicoach	Mercedes Vario
Profile	Steel	12m	3.2m coach	Dennis Javelin, Volvo B7R
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1999 V reg Mercedes Cheetah
25 recliners, video/CD/radio/PA system, hot water boiler, MoT November 2005
£52,000 o.n.o + VAT

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53 recliners, new engine fitted summer 2004, toilet/video/radio-tape, MoT August 2005

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**2000 Volvo BR7 Plaxton Prima,
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1998 S-reg £89,000 + VAT

MAN engine/ 8 speed g/box, 48 seats, retractable belts, centre toilet, hot drinks, fridge, video, 2 screens/ radio/ pa, central locking, courier seat, courier box. Power o/side centre door. MoT Jan 2006 – 562,000 kms



1996 N-reg £79,000 + VAT

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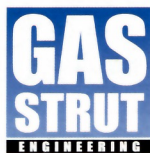
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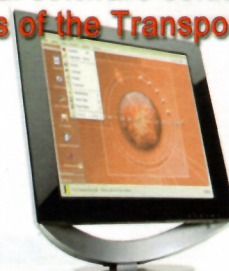
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■ Russell Gard

AFTER a quiet spell for management reshuffles at FirstGroup, **RUSSELL GARD**, commercial director at First Manchester, left the company this week. Gard had been in the post for five years. He hit the local headlines in December, when in support of charity, he was co-driver on a 1992 Mercedes-Benz minibus, which was donated by First to a school for deaf people in The Gambia, driving it some 3,000 miles through France, Spain, Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal. A successor has not yet been appointed.

GoSkills now has a full complement of business advisers with the addition of **HELEN SMITH** to its team. Smith takes on the responsibility for providing strategic support to businesses within the south-east region on skills and training issues. She

previously worked with the Learning & Skills Council in London and the south-east as a senior workforce development adviser.



■ Helen Smith

STEPHEN BARBER has decided to take early retirement on conclusion of the deal to merge Wallace Arnold and Shearings, expected to take place next month.

Barber, currently managing director of the Wallace Arnold coach business, has spent a total of 29 years with the company, punctuated by a seven-year spell at National Holidays between 1978 and 1985 after which he rejoined WA. His career started with Halifax Corporation, where he worked for two years in the late 1960s before moving into coaching at Wallace Arnold.



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